

DEMERARA.

A Tale.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

'Till now, ye have gone on and filled the time
With all licentious measure, making your wills
The scope of justice : till now, as many such
As slept within the shadow of your power,
Have wandered with their traversed arms, and breathed
Their sufferance vainly. Now the time is flush
When crouching marrow, in the bearer strong,
Cries of itself—NO MORE.'—SHAKESPEARE.

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PREFACE.

INSTEAD of encumbering my small pages with references to authorities and acknowledgments of suggestions, I give notice in this place that I am indebted to various authors and to some private friends, not only for the information on which the argument of this tale is founded, but for lights respecting negro character and manners which have enabled me to impart whatever truth may be recognized in my slave personages. My object having been to appropriate every thing, properly authenticated, which could illustrate my subject, I leave it to those who may be amused by the employment to point out whence I derived this argument, or that anecdote, or those elements of scenery. At the same time, I cannot admit that I have *copied*. The characters are intended to be original, the arguments are recast, the descriptions recomposed, and, to the best of my knowledge, no part of the work is a mere republication of what has been written before.

If it be objected that the characters for which sympathy is claimed might have been made more interesting, I reply that our sympathy for slaves ought to increase in proportion to their vices and follies, if it can be proved that those vices and follies arise out of the position in which we place

them, or allow them to remain. If the champions of the slave had but seen how his cause is aided by representing him as he is,—not only revengeful, but selfish and mean,—not only treacherous to his master, but knavish to his countrymen, indolent, conceited, hypocritical, and sensual,—we should have had fewer narratives of slaves more virtuous than a free peasantry, and exposed to the delicate miseries of a refined love of which they are incapable, or of social sensibilities which can never be generated in such a social condition as theirs.

That slaves cannot be made objects of attachment is one argument against them in the mouths of slaveholders. I have attempted to employ the same argument in their behalf. That they command our sympathies by their injuries alone, that they claim our compassion by their vices yet more than by their sufferings, is a statement the force of which their adversaries cannot gainsay, since they themselves have furnished us with the plea.

While endeavouring to preserve the characteristics of Negro minds and manners, I have not attempted to imitate the language of slaves. Their jargon would be intolerable to writer and readers, if carried through a volume. My personages, therefore, speak the English which would be natural to them, if they spoke what can be called English at all.

If I had believed, as many do, that strong feeling impairs the soundness of reasoning, I should assuredly have avoided the subject of the

following tale, since SLAVERY is a topic which cannot be approached without emotion. But, convinced as I am, on the contrary, that the reason and the sensibilities are made for co-operation, and perceiving, as I do, that the most stirring eloquence issues from the calmest logic, I have not hesitated to bring calculations and reasonings to bear on a subject which awakens the drowsiest, and fires the coldest. Whether the deductions which appear to me as clear as day, are here made equally apparent to others, I am unable to judge. I can only testify that it has been my most earnest desire to make them so, and to lead the minds of my readers through the same course with my own. If I have succeeded, they will find that the argumentative part of the subject arises naturally from that which appears at first sight to bear the least relation to argument.

While conversing directly with my readers, I take the opportunity of thanking those friends to my undertaking whom I cannot approach through other channels, for the important assistance they have afforded me, by furnishing me with books and other means of information on the topics of my course which yet remain to be treated. Of all the kind offices which have been rendered to me on account of this work, the one in question is perhaps the most acceptable, because the most widely beneficial.

H. M.

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DEMERARA.

CHAPTER I.

SUNRISE BRINGS SORROW IN DEMERARA.

THE winter of the tropics is the most delicious of all seasons of any climate to inhabitants of the temperate zone. The autumnal deluge is over : there is no further apprehension of hurricanes for many months : the storms of hail are driven far southwards by the steady north winds, which spread coolness and refreshment among the groves and over the plains. The sea, whose rough and heavy swell seemed but lately to threaten to swallow up the island and desolate the coasts, now spreads as blue as the heavens themselves, and kisses the silent shore. Inland, the woods are as leafy as in an English June ; for there, buds, blossoms, and fruits abound throughout the year. The groves of cedar and mahogany, of the wild cotton-tree and the fig, form an assemblage of majestic columns, roofed by a canopy of foliage which the sun never penetrates, while the winds pass through, and come and go as they list. - In the richest regions of

this department of the globe, the cane-fields look flourishing at this season, and coffee-plantations clothe the sides of the hills. All inanimate things look bright; and birds of gay plumage, and animals of strange forms and habits add to the interest and beauty of the scene in the eye of a stranger.

The brightest beauty, the deepest interest, however, is not for strangers, but for those who return to a region like this after years of absence. ~~like~~ two travellers who were hastening, one fine January day, to reach their long-left home,—a plantation in Demerara. Alfred Bruce and his sister Mary had been sent to England for their education when they were, the one seven, the other six years of age. They had spent fourteen years without seeing their parents, except that their father paid one short visit to England about the middle of the time. Of him, they had, of course, a very vivid recollection, as they believed they had of their mother, of their nurse, of the localities of the plantation, and the general appearance of the country. They now, however, found themselves so much mistaken in the last particular, that they began to doubt the accuracy of their memories about the rest.

On landing, they had been full of delight at the contrast between an English and a Guiana winter. When they had gone on board, in the Thames, a thick fog had hung over London, and concealed every object from them but the houses on the banks, which looked all the more dingy for the snow which lay upon their roofs. When

they landed, their native shores reposed in the serene beauty of an evening sunshine. By as bright a sunshine they were lighted on the next day; and it still shone upon them as they approached their father's estate; but it no longer seemed to gladden them, for they became more and more silent, only now and then uttering an exclamation.

"How altered every place looks!" said Mary. "The birds seem the only living things."

A servant, who had come to meet the travellers with the carriage, reminded her that it was now the time of dinner, and that in an hour or so the slaves would be seen in the fields again.

"It is not only that we see no people," said Alfred; "but the country, cultivated as it is, looks uninhabited. No villages, no farm-houses! Only a mansion here and there, seemingly going to decay, with a crowd of hovels near it. I remembered nothing of this. Did you, Mary?"

No. Mary thought the face of the country must have changed very considerably; but the old servant said it was much the same as it had always been in his time.

"Something must have befallen the cattle, surely?" observed Mary. "I never saw such wretched, starved-looking cows in England."

The servant, who had never beheld any better, smiled at his young mistress's prejudices, and only answered that these were her father's cattle, and that yonder mansion was his house.

In a few minutes more, the long-anticipated

meeting had taken place. Alfred, sitting beside his mother's couch, with his beautiful little sister Louisa on his knee ; and Mary, with her father's arm about her waist, forgot all their expectations, all their confused recollections, in present happiness. Their only anxiety was for Mrs. Bruce, who looked as if recovering from an illness. They would not believe her when she declared, with a languid smile, that she was as well as usual ; but her husband added his testimony that she had never been better. Mrs. Bruce would have been as much surprised at her daughter's fresh colour and robust appearance, if she had not been more in the habit of intercourse with Europeans than her daughter with West Indians.

These young people were far happier this first day—far more exempt from disappointment—than many who return to the home of their childhood after years of absence. Their father was full of joy,—their mother, of tenderness. Louisa was as spirited, and clever, and captivating a little girl as they had ever seen ; and her perfect frankness and ease of manner showed them how much liberty of speech and action was allowed her by her parents, and how entirely they might therefore reckon on the freedom which is so precious to young people when they reach what appears to them the age of discretion. Alfred was as much surprised as pleased to observe this spirit of independence in other members of the family. The white servants, as well those whom he had never seen before as the compa-

nions of his childhood, met him with an outstretched hand and a hearty welcome; and he observed that they addressed his father more as if they were his equals than his domestics. Alfred immediately concluded that his most sanguine hopes were justified, and that his father was indeed no tyrant, no arbitrary disposer of the fortunes of his inferiors, but a just and kind employer of their industry.

Mary, meanwhile, could not help observing the strangeness of the domestic management she witnessed. The black servants whom she met about the house were only half-clothed, and many of them without shoes and stockings; while her mother was as splendidly dressed as if she had been going to a ball. The rich side-board of plate, and the whole arrangement of the table, answered to her dim but grand remembrances of the magnificence in which her parents lived; but the house was in as bad repair, and every apartment as unfinished, as if the mansion was going to decay before it was half completed. Having been told, however, before she left England, that she must not look for English comfort in another climate, she presently reconciled herself to whatever displeased her eye or her taste.

Before Louisa went to bed, her brother asked her if she would take a walk with him and Mary in the cool of the morning: they remembered the sound of the conch of old, and they wished to see the people go forth to their work. Louisa laughed heartily, supposing her brother to be in

jest; and Mrs. Bruce explained that nobody in the house was up for many hours after the conch sounded; but when it appeared that Alfred was serious, Louisa, liking the idea of a frolic, promised to be ready. There was no occasion, as there would have been in England, to make any proviso about the weather being fine.

It was a delicious morning, bright and balmy, when the young people went forth. The sun was just peeping above the horizon, and the families of slaves appearing from their dwellings. They came with a lagging step, as if they did not hear the impatient call of the white man who acted as superintendent, or the crack of the driver's whip. Their names were called over, and very few were missing. The driver pointed with his whip to the sun, and observed that there was no excuse for sluggards on so bright a morning.

"Do you find the weather make much difference?" inquired Alfred.

"All the difference, sir. On a chill, foggy morning, such as we sometimes have at this season, it is impossible to collect the half of them before breakfast; and those that come do little or no work. They like the whip better than a fog, for they are made to live in sunshine."

"Does my father insist on their working in raw weather?" asked Alfred. "I should not have thought it could answer to either party."

"They are so lazy," replied the overseer, "that it does not do to admit any excuse whatever, except in particular cases. If we once let

them off on such a plea, we should soon hear of more just as good."

"True enough," thought Alfred, who, earnestly as he had endeavoured to keep his mind free from prejudice respecting the institution of slavery, yet entertained a deep dislike of the system.

More than a third of the slaves assembled were men and women of the ages most fitted for hard labour, and of the greatest strength of frame that negroes attain in slavery. These brought with them their hoes and knives, and each a portion of provision for breakfast. Having delivered their vegetables to the women who were to cook their messes, they were marched off to their labour in the coffee-walks. The second gang consisted of young boys and girls, women who were not strong enough for severe toil, and invalids who were sufficiently recovered to do light work: these were dispersed in the plantations, weeding between the rows of young plants. Little children, with an old woman near to take care of them, were set to collect greens for the pigs, or to weed the garden, or to fetch and carry what was wanted. These formed the third gang; and they showed far more alacrity, and were found to do much more in proportion to their strength, than the stoutest man of the first company. They alone showed any interest in the presence of the strangers. They looked back at Mary from time to time as the old woman sent them before her to the garden, and were seen to peep from the

gates as long as Alfred and his sisters remained in sight. The other gangs did not appear to observe that any one was by ; and such of them as were spoken to scarcely looked at their young master as they made their reply.

The young people took a turn through the walks, where the slaves were setting coffee-plants. There could not be better materials to work upon, a finer climate to live in, a richer promise of a due reward for labour, than Alfred saw before him ; but never had he beheld employment so listlessly pursued, and such a waste of time. When he observed how the walks were sheltered from the north winds, how thriving the young plants appeared, how fit a soil the warm gravelly mould formed for their growth, he almost longed to be a labourer himself, at least during the cool morning hours. But the people before him did not seem to share his taste. At a little distance he could scarcely perceive that any of them moved ; and when they did, it was in a more slow and indolent manner than he could have conceived. He had seen labourers in an English plantation marking out the ground, and digging the holes, and spreading the roots, and covering them with so much despatch, that the business of the superintendent was to watch that they did not get over their ground too fast ; while here it took eight minutes to measure eight feet from stem to stem ; and as for laying the roots, one would have thought each fibre weighed a stone by the difficulty there seemed to be in the work. He reminded Mary how, at this hour of

the morning, an English ploughman leads forth his team in the chill of a February mist, and whistles, while eye and hand are busy marking out his furrows; while, in this bright and fragrant season, the black labourers before them seemed to heed neither their employment on the one hand nor the sunshine on the other. Quite out of patience, at last, at seeing a strong man throw down his hoe, when the hole he was preparing was all but cleared, Alfred snatched up the tool, finished the business, and went on to another and another, till he had done more in half an hour than any slave near him since sunrise. Louisa looked on in horror; for she had never seen a white man, much less a gentleman, at work in a plantation; but when she perceived that her sister looked more disposed to help than to find fault, she ran away laughing to tell the overseer what Alfred was doing.

"You look well pleased to have your work done for you," said Alfred to the slave; "but I hope you will now bestir yourself as briskly for your master as I have done for you."

When Alfred looked at the man for an answer, he fancied that he knew his face.

"What is your name?"

"Willy."

"What, old Mark's son, Willy?"

"Yes, old Mark is my father."

"Why, Willy, have you forgotten me as I had nearly forgotten you? Don't you remember master Alfred?"

"O yes, very well."

"Is this Willy who used to carry you on his shoulders?" asked Mary, "and who used to draw my little chaise round the garden? He was a high-spirited, merry boy, at——what age was he then?"

"Twelve when we went away. But, Willy, why did not you come and speak to me as soon as you saw me? You might have been sure that I should remember you when you told me your name."

Willy made no answer, so Alfred went on—

"I find your father is alive still, and I mean to go and see him to-day; for I hear he keeps at home now on account of his great age. Can you show me his cottage?"

Willy pointed out a cottage of rather a superior appearance to some about it, and said his father was always within or in the provision-ground beside it. His mother was dead, but his two sisters, Becky and Nell, were at hand; one was now in the field yonder, and the other was one of the cooks, whom he would see preparing breakfast under the tree.

There was time to see the slaves at breakfast before the same meal would be ready at home. They assembled in the shade at the sound of the conch, and each had his mess served out to him. The young people did not wish to interfere with this short period of rest, and therefore, after speaking kindly to two or three whom they remembered, they walked away. As they were going, they met a few of the sluggards who had not put in their appearance at the proper hour,

and who sauntered along, unwilling (as they well might be) to meet the driver.

"What will be done to them?" asked Mary.

"They will only be whipped a little," said Louisa. Her sister stared to hear her speak so lightly of being whipped.

"O, I do not mean flogged so that they cannot work; but just a stroke or two, this way."

And she switched her brother with the cane she snatched from his hand. Seeing that both looked still dissatisfied, she went on—

"What better can they do in England when people are late at their work? for I suppose people sleep too long there sometimes, as they do here."

Her brother told her, to her great surprise, that lazy people are punished in England by having their work taken from them; there being plenty of industrious labourers who are glad to get it. She said there was nothing her papa's slaves would like so much as not to have to work; but she had never heard of such a thing being allowed, except on Sundays and holidays.

In their way home they looked in on old Mark, whom they found eating his breakfast, attended upon by his daughter Becky, who had come in from the field for that purpose. Mark had been an industrious man in his day—in his own provision-ground at least; and, in consequence, he was better off than most of his neighbours. His cottage consisted of three rooms, and had a boarded floor. He had a chest for his clothes, and at holiday times he was more

gaily dressed than any of his younger neighbours. A few orange-trees and bananas shaded the cottage, and gave the outside a somewhat picturesque appearance, but the inside looked anything but agreeable, Mary thought. The walls were merely wattled and smeared with plaster; and the roof, thatched with cocoa-nut leaves, had holes in it to let out the smoke of the nightly fire, which is necessary to keep negroes warm enough to sleep. In the day-time they cook out of doors.

Mark had never been very bright in his intellects during his best days; and now the little light he had was clouded with age. He was easily made to understand, however, who his guests were. He told some anecdotes of Alfred's childhood; and when once set talking, went on as if he would never have done. He appeared excessively conceited; for the tendency of all he said was to prove his own merits. He related how he had told the truth on one occasion, and been brave on another; and how the overseer had been heard to say that he made the most of his provision-ground, and how the estimate of his value had been raised from time to time. Even when he gave instances of his master's kindness to him, it appeared that he only did so as proving his own merit. What was yet more strange, Becky had exactly the same taste in conversation. She not only listened with much deference to all her father had to say, but took up the strain when he let it fall. The young people soon grew tired of this, and cut short the

rambling narratives of the compliments which Becky had received from white people in her time. The conceit only took a new form, however; at every word of kindness which either Alfred or Mary spoke, both the slaves looked prouder and prouder.

"What odd, disagreeable people!" exclaimed Mary, as she turned away from the door; "I always thought we should find slaves too humble, servile; I hardly know how to treat them when they are proud."

"Our slaves are particularly proud, because papa has treated them kindly," observed Louisa. "Mr. Mitchelson laughs at us when we are tired of hearing them praise themselves, and says that if we used them properly they would never tease us in that way; and I have heard that Mrs. Mitchelson says to her daughter, 'My dear, do not look so conceited, or I shall think you have been talking with Mr. Bruce's slaves.'"

Louisa could not satisfy her brother as to why slaves were made disagreeable by being kindly treated. All she knew was, that slaves were either silent and obstinate, like Willy, or talkative and conceited like his father and sisters. Alfred pondered the matter as he went home. "My loves!" said their mother, in her usual feeble voice, as the young folks entered the breakfast-room, "how weary you must be with all you have done! I would have had breakfast an hour earlier than usual if you had been in; for I am sure you must all be tired to death. Louisa, love, rest yourself on my couch."

Louisa did so ; and her brother and sister were not believed when they declared they were untired.

“ When you know our climate a little better,” said Mr. Bruce, “ you will no more dream of such long walks than the English of staying at home all a fine summer’s day ; which I suppose they seldom do. But if you really are not tired, Alfred, we will ride over to Paradise by and by. I promised to take you to see your old friends, the Mitchelsons, as soon as you arrived ; and they are in a hurry to welcome you.”

CHAPTER II.

LAW ENDANGERS PROPERTY IN DEMERARA.

DURING a ride of several miles, Mr. Bruce and his son were deep in conversation on the subject of their affairs, which were in a state to cause great anxiety to both, though the anxiety of each differed much in character. Mr. Bruce had made less and less by his plantation every year for some years past ; and he was now quite out of heart, and full of complaints about the hardships inflicted on himself and his brother planters, by what he called oppression at home, and the competition of other countries in their trade. He was not a very clear-headed, though a good-

hearted man; and he had passed nearly his whole life within the bounds of his own plantation; so that he, as a matter of course, adopted the views of planters in general, and joined in the cry for higher bounties on West India produce, and thought that the obvious way to relieve West India distress was to obtain more exclusive monopolies. He took credit to himself for being even better entitled than most of his brethren to complain of neglect and want of protection, as he could not oppress his slaves in his turn, nor endeavour to wrest out of them a compensation for his losses in trade. He was too humane a man for this. Thus believing that through the cruelty of the government and nation at home, and his own tender-heartedness, he was going to ruin at a great rate, he was heartily tired of his occupations, and ready to open his mind to his son, and consult with him as to what should be done.

Young as Alfred was, he was deserving of his father's confidence, and far more likely to offer him good counsel, when he should have had a little experience, than any of the neighbouring gentlemen who met from time to time to condole with each other, and draw up memorials to Government. Alfred had been in good hands in England. He had been educated for the station he was to hold, and so carefully instructed in both sides of the great questions which were to be before him through life, that there was no danger of his being blind to all but what he chose

to see, or deaf to all but that which a certain class chose to say. A fine estate in Barbadoes was likely soon to lapse to him ; and the knowledge that he might at any hour be called upon to act in the responsible situation for which he had been educated, stimulated his study of his duties and his insight into his prospects. He did not, of course, make up his mind respecting the details of the management of a plantation before he had had the opportunity of observing how the actual system worked ; but certain broad principles were fixed in his mind,—principles which may be attested in any part of the world, and which could not, he thought, be made void by any connexion, or obscured by any aspect of circumstances whatever. With these principles full in his mind, he began, from the moment he set foot on shore, to observe all that surrounded him wherever he went, and to obtain information from every class of persons to whom he could gain access.

On the present occasion, his father enforced his complaints of West India adversity, by pointing to the estates on either hand as they rode along, and relating how they had changed owners, and what disasters had befallen their various proprietors.

“ In England,” said he, “ estates go down from generation to generation; and a man may have some pleasure in improving and cultivating, in the hope that his children’s great-grandchildren may profit by and carry on his labours.

But here, no man knows whether his son will be the better for all he does."

"We shall never prosper," replied Alfred, "till the system is wholly changed. Security of property is one of the prime elements of prosperity."

"And that security can never be reached here, son. As soon as a man thinks he is likely to do well, there comes a hurricane, or a mortality among his slaves, or, worst of all, an insurrection; and perpetually, some thwarting measure of our enemies at home. They need not envy us our possessions here; for I am sure it requires the patience of Job to be an India planter."

"It must require more patience, father, than I shall ever have, to hold property which is needlessly insecure."

"How do you mean *needlessly* insecure?"

"I mean insecure through bad institutions. I do not see at present how we are to guard against hurricanes; but if I were convinced that the other evils you mention could not be removed, I would as soon go into Turkey and hold my chattels at the pleasure of the sultan, as be your heir. There is little to choose between any two countries where there is not security of property."

"But what I complain of, Alfred, is, that the law does not secure us our property. If the same law secures property in England, why does it not here?"

"Aye, there is the question, father. Is it not clear that there is some flaw in our institutions here which keeps them out of the pale of the protection of law? Hurricanes and bad seasons are answerable for a very small portion of our distress; and to set against them, we have, as with all our complaints we cannot deny, a very extraordinary degree of protection from government; though we cannot manage to benefit much by it. By far the larger share of our evils are such as law cannot remedy; and since that law works far better in England than here, it is plain that the fault does not rest with the law."

"I am sure it is time we were looking into it, son."

"High time, indeed: but people are unwilling to look deep enough. If some of the pains that are spent in providing expedients for the management of property, were employed in examining into its nature and tenure, we should be more in the way of finding out what part of our system is wrong."

"My dear son, you really are too hard upon us. Do you think we do not know what property is?"

"I do; because I think we hold a great deal that does not belong to us. We can find that out presently by going back to the beginning. Taking the old pagan fable of the first pair of human beings coming out of a cave, and supposing that cave to be in yonder hill,—what

property,²—what of *their own* would that man and woman have on first coming into the daylight ? ”

“ As soon as they chose to take possession, they might have a whole continent.”

“ Aye ; but before they took possession : as they stood, hand in hand, at the mouth of the cave.”

“ Why nothing : for if the man said, ‘ That tree, bending with fruit, is mine,’ the woman might say, ‘ No, I want it ;’ and neither could give a reason for keeping it that the other might not offer as well.”

“ True,—as to the fruit tree : but there is a possession for each which each has a sound reason for claiming. Suppose the man to say to the woman, ‘ The hair of my head is too short, and I will have some of yours ;’ or the woman to say, ‘ I have not strength enough in my limbs, and you must work for me,’ has either any property in the person of the other ? ”

“ Certainly not. If the woman wants the whole of her hair to shade her face at noonday, and the man the whole strength of his limbs for toil or sport, there is no reason why each should not keep his own if he can. But most likely one would be stronger than the other, and then possession would be taken.”

“ But not property established. If the man cut off the woman’s tresses while she slept, the hair would be no longer a part of the woman, as strength of limb or faculties of sense : yet the woman would still have the best title to it as

having been hers by original endowment. If the woman, in her turn, bound the man's feet as he lay sick on the ground, and would not release him till he had dug up as many roots for her as she chose, would the man, therefore, or his strength of limb, become her property ? ”

“ Certainly not ; for if he chooses to dig up no more roots than he eats himself, she can do nothing with him for her own advantage ; and the moment he can free himself he will. This is merely force acting against force, and there is no right in the case.”

“ But the woman has a right to cut off her own hair, and the man to employ his own strength, as long as he does not trespass on his companion's personal rights. Now, we see that man has no natural property in man.”

“ Nor in anything else but himself,” interrupted Mr. Bruce, “ as you began by showing. If you can prove that man has now any right to property in the fruits of the earth, it follows that he may in man.”

“ I think not,” said Alfred. “ The question depends on what constitutes *right*. I think that man has a conventional, though not a natural right, to the productions of the earth ; but neither the one nor the other can sanction his holding man in property. There may be a general agreement that men shall take and keep possession of portions of land ; but there can never be a general agreement that man shall be lord of man. If the man and woman agree to take each a portion of land, and not to interfere with one another,

that agreement is a kind of law; and, in proportion as it is observed, the property of each will be secure. The same plan is pursued by their descendants till they become too numerous to make a mere agreement a sufficient security. They then agree upon an express law, sanctioned by certain punishments, which once more secure to each the possession of what has now become his property by common consent."

"Such agreement and such law," said Mr. Bruce, "are essential to the general good; for there would be no end to violence and fraud, no inducement to improvement, no mutual confidence and enjoyment, if the law of brute force were to exclude all other law."

"True," said Alfred. "The general good is not only the origin, but ought to be the end and aim of the institution of property. With the property in man which has been assumed from age to age, the case is very different; and there never was a time when that sort of property could be secure, or established by general agreement, or conducive to the general good. One needs but to draw a parallel between the histories of the two kinds of property to see this."

"Histories too long for me and my neighbours to study, I am afraid, Alfred."

"They may be very briefly sketched, father. Capital held by the tenure of mutual agreement,—that is, property in all things created subordinate to man, has a perpetual tendency to increase and improvement; and every such increase is an addition to the good of society.

Cultivators of the land have made their portions more and more productive, so as to maintain a greater number of people perpetually. Inventions have arisen, arts have improved, manufactures have extended, till a far larger multitude of people spend their lives in ease and enjoyment, than would ever have been born if security of property had been unknown. There is this conspicuous mark of blessing on capital rightly applied, that the more it increases the more it will increase; while precisely the reverse is the fact with that which is unrighteously made capital. The more eagerly it is applied, the faster it dwindles away; the more it is husbanded, the more want it causes. Its increase adds to the sum of human misery; its diminution brings a proportionate relief."

"Why, then, has there been slavery in all ages of the world?"

"Because the race, like the individual, is slow in learning by experience: but the race has learned, and goes on to learn notwithstanding; and slavery becomes less extensive with the lapse of centuries. In ancient times, a great part of the population of the most polished states was the property of the rest. Those were the days when the lords of the race lived in barbarous, comfortless splendour, and the bulk of the people in extreme hardship;—the days of Greek and Roman slavery. Then came the bondage and villeinage of the Gothic nations,—far more tolerable than the ancient slavery, because the bondmen lived on their native soil, and had some

sort of mutual interest with their owners; but it was not till they were allowed property that their population increased, and the condition of themselves and their masters improved. The experience of this improvement led to further emancipation; and that comparative freedom again to further improvement, till the state of a boor as to health, comfort, and security of property, is now superior to that of the lord of his forefathers. In the same manner, my dear sir, it might be hoped that the condition of the descendants of your slaves, a thousand years hence, would be happier than yours to-day, if our slaves were the original inhabitants of the soil they till. As it is, I fear that our bad institutions will die out only in the persons of those most injured by them. But that they will die out, the slave-history of Europe is our warrant; and then, and then only, will the laws of England secure the property of Englishmen as fully abroad as at home. It is no reproach upon laws framed to secure righteous property, that they do not guard that which is unrighteous. Consider once more who are the parties to the law, and the case will be clear.

“The government and the holders of the property are the parties to the maintenance of the law. The infringers of the law are the third party, whom it is the mutual interest of the other two to punish. So the matter stands in England, where the law works comparatively well. Here the case is wholly changed by the second and third parties being identical, while the first

treats them as being opposed to each other. The infringer of the law,—that is, the rebellious slave, being the property of—that is, the same party with, his owner, the benefits of the compact are destroyed to all. If the slave is not to be punished, the owner's property (his plantation) is not safe. . If he is punished, the owner's property (the slave) is injured. No wonder the master complains of the double risk to his property; but such risk is the necessary consequence of holding a subject of the law in property."

"You put me in mind, son, of old Hodge's complaint,—you remember Hodge,—about his vicious bull. He thought it very hard that, after all the mischief done to his own stock, he should be compelled by the overseer to kill the bull. Hodge owned a rebellious subject of the law."

"True; and Hodge was to be pitied, because there was no making a free labourer of his bull. But if he had had the choice whether to hold the animal itself as capital, or only its labour, we should have laid the blame of his double loss upon himself."

"You must hear what Mitchelson has to say on that subject, son. He has suffered as much in his time as any man from troublesome slaves. More than one was executed, and several ran away while his last lease was current. His management has changed, however, with the change of times."

"Is he suffering, like every body else?"

"Yes; and I do not think he would have renewed his lease if he had anticipated how prices

would fall. But he is a prudent man, and knows how to mould his plan to differences of circumstance."

"Who is his landlord?"

"Stanley, who has lived in England these fifteen years, you know. When he left this neighbourhood, he let Paradise to Mitchelson for ten years, at a thousand a year. There was a permanent population of 300 slaves on the estate at that time."

"If there were no more than 300 slaves, sugars must have borne a better price than they do now, to make it a good bargain to Mitchelson."

"They averaged a gross price of 30*l.* a ton. In addition to the rent, the other charges amounted to about 20*l.* a ton; so that Mitchelson's net income was 1000*l.*"

"And prices being higher than at present, he was tempted to work his slaves to the utmost?"

"Yes; but another part of the agreement was, that the plantation, with all belonging to it, should be appraised when the lease expired, and that Mitchelson should pay up for any damage it might have sustained, or pocket the value of any improvement. He made his calculations carefully, and found that it would hardly answer to overwork his slaves considerably, as what he would have to pay up for the sacrifice of life at the end of ten years, would balance the present increase of profits from making more sugar; so he began moderately: but when prices rose to 40*l.* a ton, adding 2000*l.* to his income, it be-

came clearly his interest to increase his crop. He determined therefore to add 100 tons to it, even at an expense of life of 1000*l*. But it is inconceivable what trouble he had after a time. He can tell you as much as any man I know about the inefficiency of the law for the protection of property."

Alfred made no reply; and there was a long silence.

"Well!" continued his father, "do not you wish to know the end of Mitchelson's speculation?"

"O! by all means. I was thinking what would be the issue of it—at the end of time."

"At the close of the lease,—that is, five years ago,—he willingly paid up for the slaves that were under-ground, and got a renewal——"

"Pray, did Stanley understand his system?"

"Why, I should suppose he did, having lived here some years himself; but whether he did or not, he found Mitchelson a good tenant, and that was all that concerned him. No sooner was Mitchelson set going again, than prices fell, and fell, till they were only 25*l*. a ton."

"Thank God!" cried Alfred.

"Nay; I was really very sorry, independently of my own stake in the market. It was truly mortifying that it should happen at the beginning of a lease. He made the best of it, however, and saw that if he could not bring his crops just to answer the rent and expenses, he might make his profit at the end of the lease by a large claim on the score of improvements. So he changed

his system entirely, as you will see presently. He raises food for slaves and cattle on ground which he cropped before, feeds them well and works them lightly, so that their numbers may increase, and has even had his slaves taught mechanical arts. He will have a pretty heavy lump of profits, at the end of another five years, if this state of things continues."

"We are told in England, father, that it is the interest of planters to be humane to their slaves, and the English are too apt to believe it. I trust that you have never put your hand to such a declaration since Mitchelson opened his affairs to you; or that you explain it away like an innkeeper I knew in England."

"What did he declare?"

"A gentleman was giving him a lecture about over-working his post-horses. 'Bless me, sir!' said the man, 'do you think I know my own interest in the poor beasts no better than that? It is my interest, you see, to keep them in good condition till the election, our great county election, which comes on in three weeks.' 'And what becomes of your horses then?' 'There must be wear and tear at those times, you know; but when that fortnight is over, there will be rest for man and beast: for it is always a dead time for posting just after an election.' 'Much good may your tender mercies do your carrion!' said the gentleman, as I shall be tempted to say to Mitchelson, if he tells me the story of his two leases."

"Let me just observe, Alfred, that I hope

you will not admit any prejudice against Mitchelson on account of your peculiar opinions about property. He is the most humane man to his white servants, the most indulgent parent, the best——”

“ Father,” interrupted Alfred, “ I assure you, once for all, that when I hear of cruelties in the gross, I execrate systems, not men. If I had thought of individuals as I do of institutions here, you would have already had my farewell, and I should have been on board ship again for England by this time.”

“ Patience! my dear boy, patience!”

“ Not with abuses, father; not with social crimes. As much as you please in enlightening those who are unaware of them: but with the abuses themselves, no patience!”

CHAPTER III.

PROSPERITY IMPOVERISHES IN DEMERARA.

ALFRED was not at all disposed to gainsay what his father protested about Mr. Mitchelson's native kindness of disposition. He remembered the days when it was a common indulgence to be carried about the grounds in Mr. Mitchelson's arms, or to sit on his knee, and listen to stories of that England to which he was to go, some

time or other. He ascribed this gentleman's treatment of his slaves, not to any love of tyranny for its own sake, but to the grand error of regarding human beings as property, operating upon pecuniary interest. Though, therefore, it was impossible to regard him with the same esteem as if he had known how to respect the rights of his fellow-men, Alfred was not disposed to visit the sins of a system upon an individual who had always treated him with kindness; and he therefore met his old friend's cordial greeting with frank good-humour.

The ladies were not at home; but they would be in long before it would be necessary for the Bruces to be turning homewards. Would they step indoors and rest, or prolong their ride to a once favourite seat of Alfred's, where the pavilion peeped out from among the trees? The gentlemen were for proceeding, Alfred with the hope of making some observations by the way, and obtaining a distant view of the sea from the verandah of the pavilion.

The gangs of slaves were at work in the cane-fields through which they passed; but the apathy with which they pursued their employment was even more striking than on Mr. Bruce's estate. Alfred thought within himself how poor is the purchase of a man. It is the mind that makes the value of the man. It is the mind which gives sight to the eye, and hearing to the ear, and strength to the limbs; and the mind cannot be purchased,—only that small portion of it which can be brought under the dread of the whip and

the stocks. Where the man is allowed the possession of himself, the purchaser of his labour is benefited by the vigour of his mind through the service of his limbs: where man is made the possession of another, the possessor loses at once and for ever, all that is most valuable in that for which he has paid the price of crime. He becomes the owner of that which only differs from an idiot in being less easily drilled into habits, and more capable of effectual revenge.

Alfred lingered to watch the scene before him, though the sun shed down a flood of rays that would have been thought intolerable in England, and though the doves were cooing in the shade which his companions had already reached, and humming-birds were flitting among the stems like flying blossoms from some paradise that better deserved the name than this. The overseer was finding fault with one of the slaves, a middle-aged man, of robust make and a more intelligent countenance than most of his companions. Alfred asked what was the matter.

"He is lazy, sir, as usual: and as usual, he says that he is a very bad labourer and never was worth much to his master; but he can work hard enough in his provision-ground. Nobody brings so many vegetables and pigs to market as Cassius."

"How is this, Cassius?" said Alfred.

Cassius only repeated what he had said about the impossibility that he should do much work, as he had always been a bad slave for labour.

At this moment the gong sounded the hour

of dinner. The overseer went away. Cassius slowly walked off, as it happened, in the same direction that Alfred was going. When he had reached the shade, the slave looked behind him to see that the overseer was not observing him; and then quickened his pace almost to a run. Alfred tied his horse to a tree, followed him, and reached his provision-ground a very few minutes after him. Cassius was already at work, digging as if he were toiling for wages.

Alfred laughed good-humouredly as he asked Cassius what he said now about the impossibility of his working like other people.

Cassius put on a sullen look while he answered, "You may ask my master, and he will tell you that he has always had trouble with me. When I was a youth, I never liked work, and I have done less and less ever since. I am worth very little to him. I have been whipped five times since last crop, and I got into the stocks many times last year. I eat more than my work pays for."

"Then I wonder your master keeps you. Don't you?"

"I wonder he puts such a high ransom upon me. It is too high for such an one as I."

"And are you working out your ransom, Cassius?"

"I am trying, sir. But I shall have eaten more than it is worth before I get money to pay it."

"Now," thought Alfred, "I understand the meaning of this extraordinary humility, and of

old Mark's and Becky's conceit, too," he added, as he remembered what had passed in the morning; "they wish to enhance their own value, from a suspicion that they will change masters one of these days; and Cassius depreciates his, because he hopes to get off with a lower ransom. Dreadful! that human beings should rate their own value according to the depth of another man's purse! They seem, too, to have no idea of natural disinterested kindness; for Mark and Becky took all the merit of my father's little indulgences to themselves. They seemed to think they must be much better than their neighbour Harry, because my father roofed their cottage after the storm, while Harry was obliged to wait till he could repair his himself. How this world is turned upside down when slaves are in it!"

"Come, Cassius," he said aloud, "I am not your master, and I am not going to speak to your master about you."

"You do not want to buy me?" inquired Cassius, looking inquisitively.

"Not I. I have no estate, and am not likely ever to want any slaves."

"What did you follow me for then?"

"Because I was curious to see how you manage your provision-ground, if you really cannot work. But do not attempt to deceive me any more. I see you are afraid of having your ransom raised. But you need not fear. I should be too much pleased to see you obtain your freedom to put any hinderance in your way. Make me your friend, Cassius; and tell me how much

money you have earned, and how much more you want; and where you mean to go if you get your liberty."

This was going too straight to the point. Cassius had never had a friend since he was parted from his father in his youth; and not remembering much of the comfort of having one, he was not ready with his confidence. He looked suspiciously at Alfred, put on a lazy, stupid look, and said nothing but a few words without meaning.

Alfred's next question, as it showed ignorance of what everybody in the West Indies knows, did more towards establishing a right understanding than anything else he could have said. It proved to the slave that the gentleman was not practising upon him.

"This is very fine soil," was Alfred's remark, as he turned up a spade-full of earth; "and yet I see nothing but plantains, and yams, and potatoes, unless that patch of corn-ground is yours too. Why do not you grow a few canes or coffee-plants? or cotton, at least, would answer your purpose better, I should think."

Cassius grinned with some feeling deeper than mirth, while he told the young ignoramus that no slaves were allowed to grow any of the articles their masters sell. This was clearly to guard against theft; but it seemed hard that the labour by which a ransom could alone be raised, must be employed on productions which can never become very valuable. Cassius laughed so long at the idea of a slave growing canes or coffee,

that Alfred began to regret the joke, for it did not seem a very merry one to him. He could and would have laughed in England to see a cottager growing pine-apples on a quarter of a rood of ground, because it would have been ridiculous, and it would not be against any law. Here the case was reversed; it was not ridiculous, and it was against the law; and Alfred was not disposed to laugh.

"How much time do you spend at work here, Cassius? Two hours a-day?"

Cassius laughed again, and said—

"I have not more than two hours for eating, and day-sleep, and my ground, altogether."

"Indeed! you go to work at six and leave off at eight for half an hour. You come home again to dinner, and you have two hours then, have not you?"

"No; one and a half: and sometimes I must sleep, when I have worked at night, and when it is very hot. We blacks grow cross if we do not sleep in the day."

"Well, then, there is the evening. You leave work at six, and there is time for much digging before dark."

"Not when we have the cattle-feed to gather. Sometimes we are at that till the night comes on. It is so cold," he continued, shivering at the thought of it. "When our bundles of grass are made up, we have to carry them far, and they gather the dew, and it trickles down our backs, while we wait to give them in. I had rather work two hours more in the field by star-light

than gather grass when the ground is damp, and be always scolded because the bundle is not bigger."

"Why," thought Alfred, "should cattle be fed by human labour? Or, if grass must be gathered, why not by people whose regular business it shall be to do it by day-light, instead of exposing those to the damp who are relaxed by the heat of the day? I will see how my father manages this."

During the whole time of conversation, as well as in each pause, Cassius went on with his work as if he had not a moment to lose. The hope of ransom was the spring that animated him. Everything about him testified to his eagerness for saving. His bed of planks, with its single mat and blanket, was his only furniture, except a few eating utensils; he had but one wooden trencher and two calabashes. Handsome as he was, Cassius did not seem to have the personal vanity of a negro, and on festival days was the least gaily dressed of the group. He never took a farthing from his hoard, and added to it on every possible occasion.

"Where do you mean to go when you have paid your ransom?" asked Alfred, "or will you buy land and remain? or be a free labourer for your master?"

"I go, sir, but my mind is not settled where. I hear there is a place over the sea, in my own country, where we may live in the same way that the whites live here; where we may grow sugar and coffee, and trade as we like, and be rich, and

even be governors—such as are most fit to be so. One of our people got ransomed and went, but we have never heard if he found such a place."

"You mean Liberia?"

"Yes, sir. Have you been there?"

"No; but I have been where I heard a great deal about the place. If I were you, I would go to Liberia as soon as I could—that is, if you can labour. No man can prosper at Liberia, or anywhere else, unless he exerts himself."

Cassius stood erect, and pointed with a smile to his grove of plantains, to his patch of maize, to his plots of vegetables, flourishing in a clean soil.

"I see, Cassius," said Alfred, "what you mean. I see that there was deceit in your way of speaking of yourself before the overseer. Cease to be a slave as soon as you can; but while you are here, be faithful to your master."

"Faithful!" exclaimed Cassius, looking full at him. "I have never stolen his sugar—I have never murdered his children—I have never even listened to those who talked of burning his canes or poisoning his cattle."

"God forbid! but if you are not industrious—if you do not speak the truth—you are not faithful."

"I should be unfaithful if I had ever promised either; but I never did. Why should I be industrious for him? And as for telling the truth, I will do it when it helps me to get my ransom; but if telling the truth hinders my being

free, I lie to myself when I tell the truth to my master, for I have said to myself that I will be free."

Alfred had nothing to reply, for his principles of morality had all a reference to a state of freedom, and he had not learned yet to apply them in circumstances which they did not suit. He would have said beforehand, that there could be no lack of arguments and sanctions for truth and fidelity, the two most clearly necessary bonds of society; but, at the moment, it appeared to him that not one would apply. He inquired whether there was no religious teacher on the estate, and whether he did not bid them be faithful and truthful?

"There was one some time ago, and he taught us a great deal. He told us what it was to be Christians, and he made us Christians, and said that our master and all his family were Christians too. But he could not teach us long, and he went away in a little while."

"What prevented his teaching you?"

"He could not make his stories seem true; and whenever he read the Gospel, there was something either to make us laugh, or to make the overseer or our master angry. At last, he preached one day about all men being brothers, and about all being equal when they were born, and that they should be equal again when they were dead. He was disgraced and sent away after that; and so he ought to be for preaching what was false; for our master says, the blacks never were and never will be equal with the

whites ; and we know that our master and the overseer are not at all like our brothers."

"And yet," said Alfred, speaking his own thoughts, rather than thinking of the prudence of what he was saying, "there were men once who sold a brother as a slave into Egypt."

"But he was not like us," said Cassius ; "for God made him a great lord over his brothers that sold him, and he let them go home again. I am sure," he continued, grinning as he spoke, "if God made us lords over the white men, we should not let them go."

"I am sorry," said Alfred, "that your teacher is gone, for it seems as if teaching like his was very much wanted. When you get to Liberia, however, you will learn these things faster and better."

He then asked for water ; and while Cassius took down a calabash and disappeared to fetch some, Alfred went on digging.

"Ah ! ha !" said the slave when he returned, "if I had a white gentleman to dig for me whenever I am away, I should soon go to Liberia : but I did not know that white gentlemen could dig."

"I cannot help you much in that way, Cassius ; but here is what will do as well," and he put some money into his hand. Cassius leaped high into the air, and was apparently going to sing ; but checked himself in a moment when he saw the face of an old negro, a neighbour of his, peeping through the fence.

"I must be going," said Alfred ; "but I

shall never find my way to the pavilion. Will this old man go with me?"

"Yes, sir; and Robert is merry and will talk all the way." So a ludicrous introduction took place between the gentleman and the roguish-looking old slave.

They had not far to go; but Robert found time to tell all his affairs to Alfred by the way. He told him that he had a cottage and provision-ground close by Cassius's, and that he had a wife as old as himself, and that they were too tired to dig and plant when they had done work, so that their ground produced but little; but that their neighbour took care that they had enough, and either gave them food or worked in their ground on a Sunday, and that he piled their fire for them every night. In answer to Alfred's remark, that Cassius was generous and kind in doing all this, old Robert said in a careless way, that Cassius was young and he and his wife old. This reminded Alfred of the fact, that respect for the aged is one of the characteristics of negroes.

He was far from feeling any of this respect in the present instance. Old Robert could not be got to answer a question straightforward, or to tell anything without contradicting himself twenty times. He told fibs about his master and Cassius and himself; had a story for every question that was asked, the object of the story being to find out how the gentleman would like to have the question answered; and praised everything and everybody that he supposed would be acceptable to a white. Alfred soon grew tired of this,

and bade him mind where he was going and leave off talking: whereupon the old man began to sing, —not, as Alfred would have liked, one of the songs of his own land, in consideration of which the cracked voice and antic action would have been forgiven,—but an English hymn, which he shouted through the wood, shaking his head, clasping his hands and turning up his eyes, which, however, never failed to warn him of the boughs which straggled across the path, and which he held aside that they might not incommodate his companion. When they came within hearing of the pavilion, the chaunt became doubly devout. Mitchelson shouted to him, with an oath, to hold his tongue, to which he answered with a flippant “Very well, sir,” and took his way back again, muttering to himself as he hobbled along.

Alfred was surprised to find that Mrs. Mitchelson and her two daughters had joined the party in the pavilion. Fruit and wine were on the table; the ladies reposed on couches and the gentlemen lolled in their chairs, as English people are wont to do in a hot climate. Alfred took his seat by a window, where the spicy winds breathed softly in, and whence he could look over cane-fields glaring in the sun with coffee-walks interspersed, over groves of the cotton-tree, of the fig, the plantain and the orange, to where the sea sparkled on the horizon, with here and there a white sail gliding before the breeze.

“What luxury!” he exclaimed, “to sit in this very seat once more, to look again on this

landscape; to be regaled with such fragrance as I have only dreamed of since my childhood, and to feast on such fruit," helping himself to an orange, "as the English at home have little more idea of than the Laplanders."

"Dear me!" said Miss Grace Mitchelson, "I thought the English ate oranges. I am sure there was something about oranges in what papa read out of the newspaper about the theatre."

"Yes," said her sister Rosa, "did not they throw orange-peel on the stage, papa?"

Alfred explained that the oranges which are thought a great treat in England, are such as would be thrown away as only half-ripe at Demerara. His father looked pleased as he praised one after another of the things in which a tropical climate excels a temperate one. Mr. Mitchelson stopped him, however, in the midst of his observations on the fertility of the soils which stretched from the height on which they sat to the distant ocean.

"Fertile indeed they have been," said he, "and fertile many of them still are; but richness of soil is not a lasting advantage like a fine climate. It wears out fast, very fast, as I can tell to my cost. If you had seen what yonder cane-field produced when it first came into my hands, and could compare it with last year's crop, you would be surprised at the change."

"Do soils become exhausted faster at Demerara than elsewhere?" asked Mr. Bruce. "If not, there is a poor prospect before our whole

race. One would fear they must starve in time. What do they say in England, son?"

"They say, sir, that soils used to be exhausted there, and that, as a matter of course, they were suffered to lie fallow from time to time; but I believe sugar-planters do not like fallows."

"We cannot afford them," said Mitchelson. "We must have crops year by year to answer our expenses; and when we have short leases, we must make the most of them, whatever becomes of the land when we have done with it."

"English farmers are so far of your opinion, that the best of them say they cannot afford fallows; but neither do they exhaust their soils."

"How in the name of wonder do they manage then?"

"They practise convertible husbandry to a greater extent than we planters ever dream of. Wheat and barley exhaust the land like canes; but by growing green crops in turn with grain, and changing corn land into pasture, they renew the powers of the soil, and may go on for ever, for aught I see, till fallows are banished from the land, and every rood is fertile in its due proportion."

"That is all very well," said Mitchelson; "but it is no example for us. Sugar is our staple, and sugar we must grow. We have little use for green crops, and less for pasture."

"In the present state of things, certainly," replied Alfred. "The question is, whether it might not answer to find a use for both? I have

seen a calculation, and I mean to verify it as I have opportunity, of the expenses and profits of the management of such an estate as this by methods of convertible husbandry. Such a system involves many changes; but they seem to me likely to be all advantageous; and I long to see them tried."

"He who made the calculation had better try, son."

"He means to do so, and I shall go over to Barbadoes, some day, and see the result. He will begin by making his slaves more like English labourers——"

"There is a foolish English fancy to begin with," observed Mitchelson.

"Employing them," continued Alfred, "in a greater variety of ways than is common here, and doing much of their work with cattle. Instead of buying provisions, importing bricks, and a hundred other things that might be procured at hand, while the soil is all the time growing barren as fast as it can, he will vary his crops, thus raising food for man and beast; he will enlarge his stock of cattle, thus providing manure for his land, and butcher's meat for his people; his horses will graze for themselves instead of the slaves doing it for them, and they, meanwhile, will be making bricks and doing other things worthy of men, while the work of cattle will be done by cattle."

"Very fine, indeed! and what becomes of his sugar all this time?"

"A certain proportion of this estate will thus,

he expects, be always kept in good heart for the production of the staple on which his profits depend. The profits of this portion and the savings consequent on his management, will amount to at least as much, at the end of ten years, as the profits of growing sugar only; while his land will be in as good condition as ever, the number of his slaves increased, the quality of his stock improved, and all in good train for going on to a state of further prosperity."

"Your friend is a proprietor, I suppose, Mr. Alfred?"

"He is; but he would follow the same plan if he held a lease."

"Not he; at least if he once knew what slaves are."

"He sees, sir, that whatever slaves may be, they can do many things that cattle cannot do, while cattle do the hardest part of slaves' work better than slaves."

"To say the truth," said Mr. Bruce, "I have often wished for ploughs and oxen, if I could but have fed the cattle and employed my lazy slaves. It did seem strange, when I came back from England, to contrast the fine farm-yards and dairies I saw there, with our paddocks, where our half-starved beasts are fed with grass ready cut."

"It reminds me," observed Alfred, "of a child's story-book I saw in England, with pictures of the world turned topsy-turvy. There was one of a mare perched in a gig, with her master in harness. We might make a fellow to

it of a man cutting grass for the ox, after having done the work of the plough."

Alfred had not forgotten that ladies were present all this time, and was still further from supposing that the conversation could be interesting to them; but he was relieved from all consideration for them, by having seen them long before drop asleep, or shut their eyes so as to prohibit conversation as much as if they were. When the gentleman rose, however, to return to the mansion; the fair ones roused themselves and took each an arm to be conducted through the wood. What was the subject of their conversation is not recorded; but it was probably not convertible husbandry, as the ladies of Demerara hear quite enough in the gross of the troubles of a plantation, to be excusable for wishing to avoid the details of grievances which they are told can be remedied by no other power than the English government.

CHAPTER IV.

CHILDHOOD IS WINTRY IN DEMERARA.

OLD Robert seemed to care so little for slavery himself, that perhaps it was natural that he should expect others to care as little; and that he should laugh at his neighbour Cassius for working so hard as he did in his provision-ground, and for

his general gravity of manner. Yet Robert knew something of the worst treatment of slaves. He was one who had survived the system of over-working which high prices had occasioned ; and he showed that he remembered its hardships by his present dislike of work and contrivances to avoid it. Not a slave on the plantation was so inventive of excuses, so rich in pretences, so ready with long stories and jokes, all designed to stave off work, as Robert, unless it were his wife. None were at the same time so impatient of idleness in others as they ; and there was not a hardship which they had suffered, not a threat which had terrified them in former days, not a punishment that it came within their power to inflict, that they did not practise whenever opportunity threw an inferior in their way. If Robert had to lead a horse or drive an ox anywhere, he was sure to beat and torment the animal to the utmost by the way. If his wife found a reptile in her dwelling, she killed it as slowly as she dared, and as cruelly as she could. It would have been well if their power had not been extended beyond beasts, birds, and reptiles ; but it was not only shown, by their example, that slavery is the school of tyranny, but, in the instance of a poor little sufferer who lived with them, that the most dreadful lot on earth is to be the slave of slaves.

Little Hester was only ten years old when she was first put under old Sukey, according to the custom by which novices in bondage are made to serve a sort of apprenticeship to those who

have been long under the yoke. Some humane masters observing the facilities thus afforded to slave-tyranny, have attempted to break through the custom, but have found that, with all its abuses, it is too much liked by the slaves to be given up. The children prefer, at the outset, being instructed by their own people; and the elderly folks find pleasure, some in the exercise of authority, and others in reviving their impressions of their own young days of friendless slavery. No one who knows how fond negroes are of excitements of feeling, will wonder at their seeking this melancholy enjoyment. There are many instances where the pupil has been cherished by a mother whose babe had been early taken from her by death or violence; or by a father who had seen his sons carried off to a distance, one by one, as they became valuable for their strength or skill. There are many more instances, however, where the young slave's lot is more chequered than that of childhood in any other part of the world; where kindness is as capricious or rare as sunshine and warmth to the blossoms of a Greenland meadow. Little Hester seemed to wither fast under the treatment of her master and mistress, as they called themselves; but a tone of voice gentler than usual, a mild word, a look of encouragement, would revive her and strengthen her till the next gleam came. There was no end to her troubles but in sleep; and she never slept without dreading the waking. Wearied as she was when she laid herself down on her mat, she was apt to sleep as

long as the old people ; and if she ever failed to jump up when the gong sounded, Robert was sure either to throw cold water over her, or to touch her feet with a blazing piece of wood from the fire, and to laugh at her start and cry. However foggy the morning, out she must go to the field, and do as much of other people's work as was put upon her by her master's order. However tired at noon, she must cook the mess of vegetables, and feed the pigs, and run hither and thither in the broiling sun. However dewy the evening, she must stand in the grass and pluck as much as she could carry ; and, having carried it, must be kept the last, as she was the youngest, before she was relieved of her burden. She dared not put it down and leave it ; for, when she once did so, she was flogged for not having gathered her portion. When she came home damp and shivering, she was thrust from the fire ; and creeping under her mat, lay awake till the smoke hung thick enough round her to warm her, and make her forget her bodily hunger and her cravings of the heart in sleep. These cravings of the heart were her worst misery ; for she had known what it was to be cherished, and to love in return. Of her father she remembered little. He had been executed for taking part in an insurrection when she was very young ; but her mother and she had lived together till lately. She had seen her mother die, and had stood by the grave where she was buried ; yet she awoke every morning expecting to see her leaning over her mat. She dreamed almost every night that

her arm was round her mother's neck, and that her mother sang to her, or that they were going together to find out the country where her father was waiting for them : but as often as she awoke, she saw old Robert's ugly face instead, as he stood with his red and blue cap on, mocking her ; or heard both shouting the hymns which she hated, because they were most sung on Sundays when she was more unhappy than on other days, being tormented at home, and just as much overworked as in the field, without any one to pity her or speak for her. Cassius now and then took her into his ground and gave her some fruit ; and he had once stopped Sukey when he thought she had beat the girl enough ; but his respect for the aged prevented his seeing how cruel these people were ; and, supposing that the poor child would be a slave all her days, he did not " make her discontented with her condition," as the overseer's phrase was on all occasions of interference.

One day, when Hester returned from her morning's work, she found the cottage empty, and her dinner left on the table as if her master and mistress had taken their's, or did not mean to return for it. The little girl danced to the door to shut it, and then sat down on her mat to eat her mess of vegetables and herrings. Almost before she had done, she sank down asleep, for, besides being overwearied as usual, the absence of scolding tongues made such an unwonted quiet in the dwelling, that she felt as if it was night. She slept this time without fear of being

roused by fire or water; for Robert was taking his turn that day as watchman of the provision-grounds in the neighbourhood; and on these occasions the old man frequently took his dinner in a neighbour's dwelling, and his wife made holiday also during the hour and a half she could call her own. Hester therefore thought herself secure till the gong should sound. She was mistaken, however; for after dreaming that she heard the dreaded voice calling her, and that she knew it was only a dream, she felt her hair twitched smartly, and started at Sukey's shout of—

“Don't you hear your master calling you?”

“Sleep has no master,” said the poor little girl, trying to rouse herself, and to remember what time of day it was. “Is the sun up? Shall I be flogged?”

“Yes; you shall be flogged if you don't run this moment to the sick house and say that your mistress is ill, and can't work any more to-day. Make haste, or you won't be there before the gong sounds.”

“But,” said the child, looking timidly at Sukey's face, which showed more signs of mirth than of pain; “they will not believe me, and then they will flog me.”

Sukey said she should go down to the sick house as soon as she could; and in the mean time began to hold her body and writhe herself about as if in great pain, while Robert mixed something in a calabash as Hester had seen him do before when he was lazy or bent on mischief,

and wanted to make himself ill for a short time to escape work. The little girl still lingered, saying—

“If you would go with me now, the surgeon would see that you are ill.”

But Sukey flying at her in a passion, and Robert giving her a tremendous kick to hasten her departure, the child fled away through the wood at her utmost speed.

“Horner,” said the surgeon to the overseer, when Hester had made her way through the crowd of reputed invalids who surrounded the door of the sick house, “what is the matter with Sukey? Where was she this morning?”

“At her work, and so merry I was obliged to make her hold her tongue. She was as well as I am two hours ago, and is now, I’ll be bound for it.”

“If she is not really ill, child,” said the surgeon, “you shall be punished for bringing such a story.”

“We’ll make you really ill, I can tell you,” Horner proceeded.

The child looked out wistfully, in hopes Sukey was coming to tell her own story. She was rejoiced to see Robert approaching with a solemn face and a calabash in his hand.

“Sukey is very bad, very bad,” he protested. “She can’t come; she can’t walk; but if the surgeon will send her some physic, she hopes she can go to her work to-morrow.”

And he displayed the contents of his calabash

—some stinking black stuff which he vowed she had just thrown up. The surgeon looked at it, and then jerked the liquor in the old rogue's face. Robert whined and muttered as he shook the perfume from his locks and wiped it from his nose and chin, but bowed humbly when the surgeon handed him a powder, and hobbled away to avoid further question. The little girl had already disappeared.

It was moonlight when she returned from delivering her bundle of cattle-feed. As she passed slowly before the fence of Cassius's ground, it seemed to her that it was not in its usual order. Another look showed her that the soil was as rough in some parts as if it had been dug up, and that the green crop was trampled and the leaves strewn about as if a herd of oxen had made their way through it. This might have been the case, as the gate stood open; and Hester stepped in to see. She started when she saw that somebody was there. Cassius stood, leaning his forehead against his low threshold, his arms folded on his breast. The child remained beside him for some minutes, hoping he would turn round, but as he did not, she gently pulled his jacket. He still took no notice. At last, a long deep sob broke from him, and the child, terrified at his agitation, ran away. He strode after her, and caught her at the gate. He held her with a strong grasp, as he cried—

“Who robbed my ground? You know, and you shall tell me. Don't dare to tell me a lie. Who robbed me?”

"Indeed, indeed, I don't know. I did not know you had been robbed."

"You did, you did. Why, don't you see?" he cried, as he dragged her from one plot to another, "here is not a potato left, the yams are all gone, and look at the plantain boughs torn down. Everything is spoiled. I have nothing to feed my pigs with. I have nothing to carry to market. I have no more money than I had a year ago. I shall not be free this year—nor the next—nor the next—nor—I wish I was dead. I shall never be free till then."

Hester did not understand what all this meant, so she remained silent and quiet.

"Child!" Cassius broke forth again, "do you want to be free? Do you know anybody that wants to be free?"

"I don't know what it is to be free," said the child, innocently.

"No, nor ever will," muttered Cassius. "It was not you that helped to rob me then. It is somebody else who wants a ransom by fair means or foul."

"You always gave me some fruit when I asked," said the child, "so why should I steal it? And I have been in the fields ever since dinner-time."

"And where have Robert and Sukey been?"

Instead of answering, Hester looked round for a way of escape. Her impatient companion shook an answer out of her.

"They beat me sometimes when I say where they are."

"I will beat you if you don't. No, no, I won't," said Cassius, relenting at the child's tears; "I never beat you, did I?"

"No, never; and I had rather anybody beat me than you; but you won't say that I saw you?"

"Not if you tell me all you know."

"Well; I don't know anything about your ground being robbed; but my master can tell you, I suppose, because he was watchman this afternoon, and I think my mistress stayed from work to help him, for she said she was ill."

"And is she ill?"

"Only the same as she always is, when she does not like to go to the field."

Cassius made no other answer to all Hester told him, than to bid her go home, as it was so late that Robert and Sukey would suspect her if she stayed longer.

Robert's door was fastened when the child got home; and when she called to be let in, her master cried out, that she should be punished in the morning for loitering; and that in the mean time she might get supper and sleep where she could, for he and Sukey would not get up to let her in. The child began to wail, but was threatened with a double flogging if she did not hold her tongue and go to sleep at the door. She sat down on the ground to consider whether she dared go and ask shelter of Cassius, or whether she should lie down on the litter of straw beside Robert's dog, and try to keep herself warm in that manner. In a minute she heard a giggle from within, and

suspecting her master might not be in bed, she crept round to where the fire-light shone through a chink, and looking in, saw both the old people up and stirring. They seemed to be making a plentiful supper, and little heaps of yams and potatoes were lying about, which she had no doubt came out of Cassius's ground. It was by this time so very cold, and the sight of a fire was so tempting, that she determined to seek shelter with Cassius, resolving, however, with a prudence melancholy at her years, to say nothing of what she had seen, and hoping that the spoils would be put out of the way of discovery before the morning.

Cassius was not gone to bed, for he knew there would be no rest for him this night. It was a relief to him to have something to do; and he bestirred himself to heap wood on the fire, to get the child some supper, and to cover her up warm. He also promised to beg her off from the threatened flogging; so that the child was unusually happy at the end of her day's troubles, and got rest by pleasanter means than crying herself to sleep.

Cassius laid his complaint against the watchman as a watchman, as he had no means of proving him to be a thief; for Robert and Sukey had employed the night in removing all traces of their spoils, which, however, filled their pockets well the next market-day. Robert was slightly punished for negligence on his beat, in the face of all the many stories he had to tell of his unequalled excellence as a watchman, and of the

extraordinary difficulties which attended his duty on that particular day. By dint of repeated and pertinacious complaints, Cassius obtained some ungracious and imperfect redress, the overseer swearing at him for his obstinacy, and his master complaining of the interference of the law in his private property.

Mr. Mitchelson was perfectly correct in saying that planters are subject to an evil which their countrymen in England are free from, when the law interferes with private property; but that evil is chargeable upon the nature of the property. It is another branch of the mischief of the claimant and the infringer of the law being opposed to one another in one sense, while in another they constitute the same party.

An injured slave appeals to the law; the law decrees him redress; and the unwilling master, while he cannot set aside the decree, complains—and the complaint, though unjust, is true in fact—that the law intermeddles in the disposal of his private property.

This fact brings in another consideration, another instance of the reversal, in the case of slavery, of all common rules,—that slaves are better protected in despotic states than under a free government. Where there is least scruple about interfering with private property,—that is, where there is a despotic magistracy,—there will be the fewest considerations to oppose to the impulses of humanity. Where the slave-holder possesses the largest influence over public opinion,—where he is a member of a colonial

assembly, or an influential elector of such a member, or a possessor of any of those means of keeping the magistracy in check, which exist only under a free government, — there is the strongest probability of the magistrate's being tempted to stifle those complaints which he knows cannot be urged elsewhere if disallowed by him.

In the days of Augustus, one Vidiſ Pollio, in the preſence of the emperor, ordered one of his ſlaves, who had committed ſome ſlight fault, to be cut in pieces and be thrown into his fiſh-pond to feed the fiſhes. The emperor thereupon commanded him to emancipate, immediately, not only that ſlave, but all the others that belonged to him.

In theſe days, no potentate can thus diſpoſe of the property of a Briton; and it is well. But it is clearly juſt that while the Briton abjures deſpotic rule, he ſhould hold none under him in ſuch ſubjection as to need the interference of deſpotic vengeance for the redreſs of their wrongs.

To attempt to combine freedom and ſlavery is to put new wine into old ſkins. Soon may the old ſkins burſt! for we ſhall never want for a better wine than they have ever held.

CHAPTER V.

NO HASTE TO THE WEDDING IN DEMERARA.

ABOUT this time there was occasion for a family consultation in old Mark's cottage; and it took place one day instead of the afternoon sleep, to which the family regularly composed themselves when dinner was done, except at such busy seasons as deprived them of the indulgence necessary to negroes.

Old Mark had talked on, as usual, all dinner time, his children listening to him as if he had been an oracle, except Nell, who, for once, seemed inattentive to her father, and full of her own thoughts. Becky observed upon this as soon as there was a pause, saying that she supposed Nell had had some scolding, or was likely to be punished for having spoiled some of her work that morning. Willy said that it was a different sort of speech that Nell had made to her; and he laughed. Becky's face clouded over at once; for, much as she had to say about the compliments paid to herself, she knew that Nell had far more.—Nell was handsomer and more spirited than Becky; and they were about equally vain; so that, till they had each a lover, there were frequent quarrels between the sisters; and even since their rivalry had ceased, Becky was subject to pangs of envy as often as she heard of her sister being more admired than herself.

Nell now explained that their neighbour Harry had made up his mind at last to marry her if she chose; and she only waited to know what her father would say.

He shook his head, and asked how long it was since there had been a slave marriage on the estate. None of the young people remembered one on their plantation, but there had been one in the neighbourhood within ten years. Mark remembered that he had been happier with his wife than before he married her; and from his own experience, would have recommended his daughters to settle; but more and more difficulties had arisen since his young days about the consequences of slaves' marriages, and he was afraid to advise the step; especially as Willy was altogether against it, out of regard to his sister, and Becky, because her own lover would not promise to marry her. Willy did not speak for a long time, while his father went on prosing about how everybody would talk, and stare, and wonder, and whether it would please or displease their master, and lastly, whether Nell would be happier or less happy after it.

"If you will marry too, Willy——"

"I won't marry," said Willy, doggedly.

"Your master values you, and so it is most likely he would not be angry; and it would make people wonder less about Nell."

"They might well wonder at me. No, father; I saw what came of the marriage in the next plantation. It was just like no marriage."

"But there is a law now to make our marriages as lawful as white people's."

"To bind a man and his wife together as long as they are both slaves; but if the man gets free, the woman cannot go with him. His money is not hers because it is his; and if anybody buys her, her husband may not follow her unless his master allows it. They cannot do their children any good. They cannot make them free, nor save them from labour, nor help them to get justice."

"But there is a pleasure in living with a wife in a cottage, and in sowing corn together, and in making the fire for one another, and in having her to talk to, and to dance with, when holidays come."

Willy observed that all this might be done without being married, and was done by everybody on the plantation, who would have married if the civil rights of marriage had been allowed to them as to the whites.

"But you do every thing for yourself, Willy. You want nobody to sing to you, or to dance with you, or to go to market with you. You want nobody to love."

"I love you, father, and Nell, and Becky."

"But I shall die soon, and Nell will marry, and Becky loves her lover. It is time you should find somebody else to love."

"The time is past, father. I began to love Clara once, just before she died; and while I was forgetting my sorrow for her, I

learned by what I saw, never to love anybody else."

"Why, Willy?"

"Because a black must be first a slave and then a man. A white woman has nobody to rule her but her husband, and nobody can hurt her without his leave: but a slave's wife must obey her master before her husband; and he cannot save her from being flogged. I saw my friend Hector throw himself on the ground when his wife was put in the stocks; and then I swore that I would never have a wife."

"But think of Hector's children, Willy. O, you do not know the pleasure of hearing one's little children laugh in the shade, when the sun makes one faint at noon! It is like a wind from the north. And to let them sleep under the same mat, and to see them play like the whites, —and then their master pats their heads sometimes when they follow him."

"Like dogs," said Willy, "that as often get a kick as a kind word. When I see little children as clever and as merry as whites, I take them up in my arms and love them; but when they are carried away where their father shall never see them again, or when their mothers look sad to find them growing as stupid as we are, I am glad that I am not their father."

"Becky!" said her father, "are these the reasons that your lover will not marry you?"

Becky made no answer; for the fact was she knew nothing more than that he thought there was no occasion.

“Willy!” said the old man again, “if you will not love nor marry here, you will try to go somewhere where you can be a man and a husband without being a slave. You work in our ground. Is it that you may be free when I am dead?”

“No, father, I shall not try to be free.”

“Why then do you sow corn and dig our ground for us? If you get money, why will you not pay it to be free?”

“I sow corn that you may have as good food as when you were young and could dig like me. I get money because others do so; but, unless it were many times as much, it does little good to me, for I shall never be free. The Englishmen, over the sea, tell us that they wish us to be free, and bid us try to buy our ransom; and when we have nearly done so, they put a higher price upon us, and laugh when we give up.”

“How can people so far off raise our price?”

“They raise the price of sugars because our masters ask them, and then our masters raise our price. Hector once hoped to buy his freedom; and it made him happy to see his master look sad, because then he knew that his master could not sell his sugar, and did not want his slaves so much, and Hector hoped that no more sugar would be sold till his master had taken his ransom and let him go. But one day the overseer told him that his ransom was too low and he must not go yet. It was because his master wanted to make sugar again; and he wanted to make sugar because the people in England

pitied our masters, and made sugar dearer that they might be rich."

"If the whites in England pitied us," said Nell, "they would make sugar cheaper that we might be free."

"Till they do," said Willy, folding his arms, "I will be as I am, I will work no more than I cannot help. I will sleep all I can, that I may forget. I will love my father till he dies, and Nell and Becky till they have husbands that will love them more than I. Then, since I cannot love, I will hate; and I will call to the hurricane to bury me under my roof and set me free."

"You will love our young master, Willy? He did not forget you while he was beyond the sea, and he is a kind master now he has come back."

"I did not forget him," said Willy. "I remember how he made me play with him when we were both boys; but I did not love him then, because he was oftener my master than my play-fellow; and I do not love him now, because he will be my master again. Don't ask me, father, to love anybody. Slaves cannot love."

Willy looked round for his sisters; but Nell was gone to Harry's cottage to tell him she would marry him, thus taking advantage of her brother's mention of husbands for herself and Becky. Becky had followed to see how Harry would take the communication. So Willy threw himself down on his mat as if going to sleep, while his father, whose ideas had been carried back to his

young days, sat at the door of the hut, singing to himself the song with which he had courted his long-buried wife.

CHAPTER VI.

MAN WORTH LESS THAN BEAST IN DEMERARA.

"WHAT can be the matter with Mitchelson?" said Mr. Bruce one day, when his son was riding with him. "See what a hurry he is in, and how vexed he looks! He is in a downright passion with his favourite mare."

Mr. Mitchelson smoothed his countenance a little as he approached, but still looked sorely troubled. The cause of his vexation was soon told. His mill-dam had burst, and been carried away at a very critical season, and nothing could repay the loss of time before it could be restored. Time was everything in such a case.

"And how long will it take to repair it?" inquired Alfred.

"Three months,—three precious months, I expect."

"Is it possible?" said Alfred. "I cannot think it."

"You judge of everything, son, as if this were England," said Mr. Bruce. "Our people do not

turn off work like the labourers you have been accustomed to see."

"Mr. Mitchelson must know best, of course," replied Alfred; "but does your surveyor, or contractor, or whoever he be, bid you wait three months?"

"He will when he hears the story which I am now on my way to tell him. I can't stop, so good morning."

"Let me go with you,—may I?" said Alfred. "I like to see and hear everything I can."

Mr. Mitchelson professing himself glad of his company, Alfred turned his horse's head in search of the contractor.

While this important personage was musing and calculating, Mr. Mitchelson kept urging,—

"Time, you know, is everything. Anything to save time."

Alfred modestly suggested that it would be worth trying the experiment of making the slaves as much like English labourers for the occasion as possible. Mitchelson laughed at the idea; but asked the contractor how long the repairs would take if the number of slaves he meant to employ were English labourers?

"From twelve to fifteen days, I should think."

"And how long if they work like slaves in general?"

"Probably sixty days."

"Somewhat under the time I fixed in my own mind. You know, Alfred, I said three months at a round guess."

"I wish—I wish——" Alfred kept saying, half to himself.

"What do you wish?" said the contractor, who understood the value of labour, and suspected that he and Alfred were of the same way of thinking on that class of subjects; "what is it you wish?"

"Perhaps Mr. Mitchelson will laugh at me for the notion; but I wish he would let you and me manage this affair, as we shall agree; you pledging yourself for the cost, and I for the time. You shall arrange the work, and I will manage the slaves."

"In that case," replied the contractor, "I would engage to finish the repairs in twenty days."

"Twenty days!" cried Mitchelson. "My dear sir, you were more right in saying sixty. You will not do it under sixty. But you may try. I give you *carte blanche*; and to leave you perfectly free, I will go away. I want to go into Berbice, and I may as well do it now while our regular business is stopped."

The other contracting parties were by no means sorry for this. Alfred's partner returned with him, and operations were commenced immediately.

§11 The main feature of Alfred's plan was to pay wages. He collected the men, told them what they had to do and expect, promised them warm clothing in case of their working early and late, showed them the ample provision of meat, bread, and vegetables he had stored at hand, marched them off, only staying behind to forbid the overseer to come within sight of the mill-dam, and

from that time never left the spot till the work was finished. Horner was very angry, and full of scorn and evil prognostications; but nobody cared except the poor women and children, upon whom he vented his ill-humour as long as he was deprived of his dominion over the able-bodied labourers.

Mr. Bruce arrived when the work was half done, to see how his son's speculation was likely to succeed. As he approached, he was struck with the appearance of activity so unusual in that region. The first sound he heard was a hum of voices, some singing, some talking, some laughing; for negroes have none of the gravity of English labourers. When they are not sullen they are merry; and now they showed that talk and mirth were no hinderance to working with might and main. Cassius toiled the hardest of all, and was the gravest; but he was happy: for this was an opportunity of increasing the fund for his ransom which he had little dreamed of. Alfred was talking with him, and lending a hand, as he did continually to one or another, when his father appeared.

"Bravo! son," cried Mr. Bruce, as Alfred ran to meet him. "You and your partner are doing wonders, I see. Will you fulfil your contract?"

"Very easily, sir, if weather remains favourable—(O! I forgot there was no fear of bad weather)—and if Mr. Mitchelson keeps out of the way, so that I may keep Horner and his whip out of the way also till we have done. The

family are all absent, you see ; but I will step in with you while you rest yourself. I was surprised to find the ladies gone too when I arrived."

" Mitchelson always takes them with him when he is absent for more than a few hours."

Alfred thought within himself that he should not have suspected the gentleman of being so very domestic.

" But come," said Mr. Bruce, dismounting and fastening up his horse, " show me the secrets of your management. What are these barrels, and whence comes this savoury smell ?"

" These barrels hold beef and pork, sir ; and the savour is from the cooking in yonder hut."

" And what is your allowance per man ?"

" As much as he chooses to eat. We should get little work done if we gave each labourer weekly no more than two pounds of herrings and eight pounds of flour, with the vegetables they grow themselves."

" The law pronounces that to be enough."

" But what says the law of nature ? You and I do no hard work ; and could we keep ourselves sleek and strong on such a supply of food ?"

" Negroes do not want so much as whites."

" That is a good reason for their having as much as they do want. Our people here are not troubled with indigestion, as far as I can perceive. What do you think of our warm jackets ?"

" I cannot imagine how they can support the

heat in such clothing. No wonder they throw them aside."

"They are only for morning and evening. The people scarcely seem to heed the morning fogs while they wear their woollens; and we make them put them on again when the sun sets——"

"Do you mean that they work after sunset of their own accord?"

"We have difficulty in making them leave off at nine o'clock. They like to sing to the moon as they work; and when they have done, they are not too tired for a dance. Father, you would more than pay for a double suit of clothing to your slaves by the improvement in their morning's work; and yet I believe you give them more than the law orders."

"Yes. One hat, shirt, jacket, and trowsers, cannot be made to last a year; and the clothing that the slaves buy for themselves is more for ornament than warmth. I do not know how the overseer clothes them, but I have always desired that they should have whatever was necessary."

Alfred said to himself that the overseer's notions of what was necessary might not be the best rule to go by.

Mr. Bruce meanwhile was looking alternately at two gangs of slaves at work after a rather different manner. He was standing on the confines of two estates; and, in a field at a little distance, a company of slaves was occupied as usual; that is, bending over the ground, but to all appear-

ance scarcely moving, silent, listless, and dull. At hand, the whole gang, from Cassius down to the youngest and weakest, were as busy as bees, and from them came as cheerful a hum, though the nature of their work rather resembled the occupation of beavers.

"Task-work with wages," said Alfred, pointing to his own gang; "eternal labour, without wages," pointing to the other. "It is not often that we have an example of the two systems before our eyes at the same moment. I need not put it to you which plan works the best."

"It is indeed very striking; but what can we do? We must hold labour as capital,—to put the question in the form you like best,—for our modes of cultivation require continuous labour. We cannot begin our tillage, and leave off and begin again, as may suit the pleasure of our labourers. We must have labour always at command."

"Undoubtedly; and which has the most labour at command at this moment,—Mitchelson, or the owner of those miserable drones yonder? And what is to prevent Mitchelson from having this efficient labour always at command if he uses the same means that have secured-it now? Labour is the product of mind as much as of body; and, to secure that product, we must sway the mind by the natural means,—by motives. A man must learn to work from self-interest before he will work for the sake of another; and labouring against self-interest is what nobody ought to expect of white men,—much less of slaves."

"I am quite of your opinion there, and, in consequence, make my slaves as comfortable as I can. Of course, every man, woman, and child, would rather play for nothing than work for nothing."

"Then surely it is best for all parties to make the connexion between labour and its reward as clear as possible. I doubt whether any slave believes that his comforts depend on the value of his work. At any rate, he often sees that they do not. And this difficulty will for ever attend the practice of holding labourers as fixed capital."

"But the maintenance of their labour, son, is reproducible as much as if they were free."

"It is; in the same way as the subsistence of oxen and horses. In both cases it is consumed and reproduced with advantage: but cattle are fixed capital, and so are slaves. But slaves differ from cattle, on the one hand, in yielding (from internal opposition) a less return for their maintenance; and from free labourers, on the other, in not being acted upon by the inducements which stimulate production as an effort of mind as well as body. In all three cases the labour is purchased. In free labourers and cattle, all the faculties work together, and to advantage; in the slave they are opposed: and therefore he is, as far as the amount of labour is concerned, the least valuable of the three."

"And too often as to the quality of his labour also, son. A slave does some few things for us that cattle and machinery could not do; but he falls far short of a free labourer in all respects. Our slaves never invent or improve."

"Why should they? No invention would shorten their toil, for they do no task-work. No improvement does them any good, for they have no share in the profits of their labour. They *can* invent and improve,—witness their ingenuity in their dwellings, and their skill in certain of their sports; but their masters will never possess their faculties, though they have purchased their limbs. Our true policy would be to divide the work of the slave between the ox and the hired labourer; we should get more out of the sinews of the one and the soul of the other, than the produce of double the number of slaves."

"I have sometimes wondered," said Mr. Bruce, "whether we do not lose on the whole by forbidding our slaves to raise exportable produce in their own grounds. They, being better adapted than ourselves to the soil and climate, might discover and practise modes of tillage from which we might gather many useful hints, which might more than repay what we should lose by their thefts."

"What you would lose by theft is a mere trifle," answered Alfred, "in the account of the cost of a negro. If they were free labourers, thieving as fast as opportunity would allow, (which being free labourers, they would not,) your blacks would cost you little in comparison of what they do now without thieving."

"How do you know?"

"I took pains to calculate the cost of a slave before I left England; and I have had the means of proving my calculation by the expe-

rience of my friend yonder, the contractor, who has had more opportunity than most people I know of mastering both sides of the question."

"Does he speak of slaves newly imported, or of those born and bred on the estate? for that makes a vast difference."

"We have reckoned both. Those imported were, of course, by far the dearest; for, in addition to the usual cost, we had to defray the expenses, in life and money, of wars on the coast of Africa, and of conveying them across the ocean, the loss under the seasoning when they arrived, and the revenue to the African trader; and, after all, they are worth less than those bred on the spot, from being unacquainted with the language, and unused to the kinds of labour in which they were to be employed."

"I never was one to advocate the importation of slaves; it is so clear that the expenses of their rearing are much less than those attending their transport. But I really do not think the cost of maintaining slaves can be greater than that of free labourers. They must both eat and drink, you know, and be clothed and housed."

"True, father; and the question therefore is, whether their maintenance can be managed the more economically by their own contrivance when they have an interest in saving, or by their master's pinching them when they have an interest in wasting his property. The free labourer has every inducement to manage his field or other possession frugally, and to husband whatever produce he may obtain. You need only look

into the state of our slave acres, to see how different the case is there. The cultivation is negligently performed, the produce stolen or wasted, so that we reap scarcely a third of the natural crop. In both cases, the master pays the subsistence of the labourer, but the slave-owner pays in addition for theft, negligence, and waste."

"Well but, Alfred, give me the items. Tell me the value of a healthy slave at twenty-one?"

"I believe his labour will be found at least 25 per cent. dearer than free labour. From birth to fifteen years of age, including food, clothing, life-insurance, and medicine, he will be an expense; will not he?"

"Yes. The work he does will scarcely pay his insurance, medicine, and attendance, leaving out his food and clothing; but from fifteen to twenty-one, his labour may just defray his expenses."

"Very well; then food and clothing for fifteen years remain to be paid; the average cost of which per annum being at the least 6*l.*, he has cost 90*l.* over and above his earnings at twenty-one years. Then if we consider that the best work of the best field-hand is worth barely two-thirds of the average field-labour of whites,—if we consider the chances of his being sick or lame, or running away, or dying,—and that if none of these things happen, he must be maintained in old age, we must feel that property of this kind ought to bring in at least 10 per cent. per annum interest on the capital laid out upon

him. Whether the labour of a black, amounting to barely two-thirds of that of a white labourer, defrays his own subsistence, his share of the expense of an overseer and a driver, and 10 per cent. interest on 90*l.*, I leave you to say."

"Certainly not, son, even if we forget that we have taken the average of free labour, and the prime of slave labour. We have said nothing of the women, whose cost is full as much, while their earnings are less than the men's. But you overlook one grand consideration ;—that whites cannot work in the summer time in this climate and on this soil."

"It is only saying 'free black' instead of 'white.' The tenure of the labour is the question, not the colour of the labourers, as long as there is a plentiful supply of whichever is wanted. Only let us look at what is passing before our eyes, and we shall see whether negroes working for wages, or even under tribute, are not as good labourers as whites."

"I have often meditated adopting the plan of tribute, Alfred, since times have gone badly with me ; but it is difficult on a coffee plantation. If I were in Brazil, the proprietor of a gold mine, or at Panama, the lord of a pearl-fishery, I would adopt their customs. I would supply my slaves with provisions and tools, and they should return me a certain quantity of gold or pearls, and keep the surplus."

"That is one way of making them work by fair means, father. It is an important approach

to emancipation, as I believe it was found in Russia. It seems, too, an excellent preparative for a state of freedom ; and surely such a preparative would never have been adopted, and would not have been allowed to proceed to entire emancipation, if such comparative freedom had not been advantageous to the master as well as the slave. It is a strong argument, brought forward by slave-holders, in favour of emancipation."

" But the plan could not be tried on a coffee plantation, son—that is the worst of it. If we lived in the neighbourhood of a large town, I would attempt it on a small scale. Some of my slaves should let their labour, paying me a weekly tribute, and keeping whatever they earned over and above. This is done in places south and west of us on this continent, as a Spanish friend of mine was telling me lately."

" Suppose we try task work instead, father ?"

" I have no other objection than this, son. If the experiment did not answer, there would be no getting the slaves back to the present system."

" A strong argument against the present system, father ; but not the less true for that : suppose then we try with some new employment. If the blacks are as stupid as they are thought to be here, we need not fear their carrying the principle out any farther than we wish. Suppose we make bricks by task-work. Why should we import them, when we have abundance of brick clay on the estate and labour to spare ?"

"It has been found to answer better to import them."

"Who says so?"

"Mr. Herbert, my old neighbour. He had not straw enough, to be sure, growing, as he does little besides sugar."

"Ah; the bounty is all in all with these sugar growers, father. They keep their eye fixed on that bounty, and give no other article of production a fair chance. Besides, I suppose he did not try task-work?"

"Not he. But consider, Alfred, how very little the freight is; and then, there is the fuel."

"The fuel is easily had; and a ton of coal will serve for eight tons of bricks. We are better supplied with straw than if we raised sugars only; and the apparatus is not expensive. Only consider, father: the labour of your slaves, at present, does not average more than fifteen-pence a day; and brickmakers, in England, make from five to seven shillings a day. Do let me try whether, by working by count, we cannot raise the value of our slave-labour, and save the expense of importation."

"But, my dear son, we do not want bricks enough to make it worth while."

"Our neighbours want them as well as ourselves; and it may answer well to withdraw a permanent portion of labour from our coffee-walks and transfer it to our brick-field. The art is not difficult, and the climate is most favourable, so confidently as we may reckon on the absence of heavy rains for weeks together."

“ Well ; we will see about it, son.”

“ I give you warning, father,” said Alfred, laughing, “ that I shall not be content with one experiment. If we save by brickmaking, I shall propose our making the bagging and packages for our coffee at home, instead of paying so high as we do for them.”

“ Nay, Alfred ; what becomes of your boasted principle of the division of labour ? ”

“ I think as highly as ever of it where labour is as productive as it ought to be. But where eight free labourers do as much work as twelve slaves, it follows that if those twelve slaves were set free, four of them would be at leisure for more work. If as much sugar was raised already as was wanted, those four labourers might make a great saving by refining and claying the sugars at home ; which business is now done elsewhere.”

“ In the Spanish colonies, where there is a large proportion of free labourers, I know they do many things among themselves which British planters do not, and thus reduce the cost of cultivation in a way that we should be very glad to imitate.”

“ Such imitation is easy enough, surely. We have only to introduce as large a proportion of free labour.”

“ The wages of free labour are so dreadfully high,” objected Mr. Bruce.

“ Only in proportion to the scarcity of free labour, I believe, father. Wherever there is little of a good thing, it is dear, according to the

general rule. Slave-labour is not only dear in itself, but it makes free labour dear also; and gives an undue advantage to free labourers at the expense of the other two parties. If we would but allow natural principles of supply and free competition to work, the rights of all parties would be equalized.—But there is Horner hovering at a distance and looking as if he longed to come and whip us all round. I must keep him off, or he will spoil our work. The very sight of him is enough to paralyse my men; they absolutely hate him.”

“And well they may,” observed Mr. Bruce. “I cannot think what makes Mitchelson keep that man in his service. Even my overseer, who knows the nature of the business well, calls him a brute.”

Alfred told his father, in a low voice, that he should think it his duty to get this man discharged as soon as possible; for he was so enraged at the adoption of a new plan, and at its evident success, that it was too probable he would ill-treat the slaves to the utmost as soon as he had them again in his power.

“He cannot vent his revenge upon me,” said Alfred, “and will therefore pour it out upon them; and since I have done the deed, I must look to the consequences. Having taken these poor creatures under my care, I must see that they do not fall back into a worse state than before. I will not quit Mr. Mitchelson’s side till I have seen him change his overseer.”

Mr. Bruce shook his head,* and made some grave remarks upon the imprudence of making enemies. He did not perceive, and his son did not remind him, that for his one new enemy he had secured a posse of grateful friends.

Mr. Mitchelson and his family returned punctually on the twenty-first day. The dam was, to their great surprise, finished, the mill fit for use, the slaves in good plight, the contractor satisfied and gone home, and all at a less cost than would have secured the reluctant labour of as many hands for sixty days;—to say nothing of the vast advantage of avoiding a suspension of the usual operations on the estate. Mr. Mitchelson being, of course, pleased, all was right, except that Horner snatched every opportunity of oppressing and thwarting the people under him; and it was no easy matter to get him dismissed. He was foolish enough to let fall words in the hearing of the slaves, which showed that he was aware he owed his situation to his master's favour only, and that he owed Alfred a grudge. The natural consequence, among a people perfectly ignorant, and yet subject to human passions, was that they adored Alfred, and hated Mr. Mitchelson and his overseer with an intense and almost equal hatred.

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTIANITY DIFFICULT IN DEMERARA.

MR. MITCHELSON told his young friend that he must not think of leaving Paradise at present. "You have served me in one way," he said, "and you now must do it in another. You have built up my mill-dam, and now you must give me the pleasure of your society. I shall be little flattered, if you give me to understand that you prefer intercourse with my slaves to associating with me and my family."

Alfred was quite disposed to remain at Paradise for a few days; and they were made days of festivity, according to the hospitable customs of the West Indies. An excursion was planned for one day, the main object of which was to inspect an estate, now to be let on lease, for which Mr. Mitchelson had been authorised by a friend to negotiate. The ladies of the family cared little for the estate; but there was some pretty country a little way beyond which Alfred had never seen, and which they visited to show him. A party of pleasure was therefore formed, and all the elegant accompaniments of such an arrangement were provided in profusion. The ladies in carriages, the gentlemen on horseback, set out in the cool of the morning, saw all they meant to see, dined luxuriously at the house

belonging to the plantation which Mr. Mitchelson had been left behind to survey, and returned in good time in the evening. Alfred was rather surprised at the anxiety of the ladies not to be delayed beyond a certain hour, and remembered how apt parties of pleasure in England are to transgress in this respect: how faithfully they promise to be home "by ten, at latest," and how fidgetty grandfathers, or anxious mothers, or officious servants, sit at home listening for carriage wheels, start when the clock strikes eleven, groan when it comes to twelve, and forgive everything when the weary, unsociable, young folks are at last safely housed, and yawn a good night to each other, leaving everything to be told the next day. The most unaccountable thing of all to him, was the extraordinary prudence of the young people.

"Come, Alfred," said Mr. Mitchelson, "we can go so much faster than the carriage this cool afternoon, that it is a pity you should not see a fine sea-view there is behind the wood there. You like a sea-view, I know."

"O papa!" exclaimed Miss Grace, as she saw them turning their horses, "what are you going to do? You do not mean to leave us!"

"Only for half an hour, my dear. We shall join you where the roads meet."

There was a general cry from the ladies that it was too late for the party to separate. Mr. Mitchelson urged that the carriages could take care of each other, and that he and Alfred could come to no harm, for he knew the road perfectly,

—a fine open road, except one bit that led through a wood ;—and the gentlemen trotted off without more controversy.

It was true that the road could not be missed. It was true that, as Mr. Mitchelson protested, the view was fine enough to have tempted them twice as far out of their way ; but it was not so true that he was clear about the way back. He thought he was, or he would not have ventured ; and for a considerable way he guided his young friend confidently, and congratulated himself on having suggested so pleasant a variety in their journey home. But changes had been made since he last went over the ground ; changes which he was long in perceiving, and of which he was not fully convinced till he had become completely bewildered about the direction in which he was proceeding. They had entered an extensive wood of which he remembered nothing : the road branched off, and he did not know whether to go right or left ; and, what was worse, both roads were found to become wilder and less marked, till they ended in being no road at all. There was nothing for it but to go back ; a proceeding which seemed to Alfred so easy, that he was astonished at the nervous agitation of his companion, who alternately checked and urged on his horse, talked fast, or would say nothing, and at last appeared so irritable as well as panic-struck, that Alfred despaired of managing him, and let him take his own way about what should be done. As might be expected, he lost the track again. They

became more involved in shade than ever, and the short twilight of that climate was darkening every moment.

If Alfred had been alone, or favoured with a more manly and agreeable companion, he would have thought it no great hardship to be obliged to pass the night in the woods of such a country as this. There could be no richer bower than the foliage around him ; no lamps in a pillared hall so beautiful as the fire-flies that began already to flit among the columnar stems which retired in long perspective on every hand ; no perfumes more delicious than the fragrance of the pimento, borne through the groves by the whispering night-wind ; no canopy so splendid as the deep blue heaven where the constellations appeared magnified as if the powers of the eye had been strengthened, where the milky-way seemed paved with planets, and where Venus rose like a little moon, and in the absence of the greater, casting a distinguishable shadow from trunk and waving bough. Alfred's heart leaped at the idea of watching, in so favourable a situation, the solemn march of night, and repairing before the dawn to the plains whence he might see the first sunbeams kiss the ocean. He could perceive no danger, and he felt no want. He could pluck grass for a bed ; he could light a fire, if it should be necessary ; and both had so lately eaten that there was no fear of being starved before morning. He turned to his companion, who had thrown himself from his horse upon the ground ; but Mitchelson's countenance looked so

gloomy in the dim light, that his young friend hesitated to address him.

"Lord have mercy upon us!" groaned Mitchelson. "What may happen if we cannot get home?"

"I was not aware there was any danger," replied Alfred. "What is our danger? not wild beasts, nor cold, nor hunger; we can light a fire——"

"O! my poor wife. O! my children. Their friends will leave them, supposing we are coming."

"I am sorry for the fright they will have," said Alfred; "but surely they will not think any great harm can befall us before morning?"

"O! what may not have happened before morning? Alfred, I had rather you and I had to battle with wild beasts than women with slaves. If the wretches find out my absence——"

The cause of all this terror now flashed upon Alfred: the same cause which made Mitchelson carry his family with him wherever he went. He was afraid to leave his household in the power of his slaves. Yet this was the country where (so people are told in England) slaves are contented and happy, and, in every respect, better off than the free peasantry of the empire! This was the country whose proprietors dared to complain of the inefficiency of British law for the security of property! The present was not the moment, however, for venting his indignation, or pointing to the obvious truths which stared him in the face. Alfred looked on his terrified com-

panion as he sat trembling on the trunk of a fallen tree, and felt nothing but pity. He could not triumph while he knew that the unhappy man was scared with visions of burning cane-fields, of a murdered wife and insulted children.

“Do not let us give up, if you are really very anxious to get home,” said Alfred gently. “I can guide you a little way back, I believe; and if you will but compose yourself, you may observe some familiar object before long which will help us into the right track. We may yet be home before midnight.”

It was past midnight, however, and the moon was high in the heaven before they got out of the wood and found themselves on a road—not the one they wanted, but one which would lead them home at length, after a circuit of a few miles. Mitchelson’s countenance, as seen by the moonlight, was pale and haggard, and the horses were so weary that they stumbled continually. Alfred, too, was sufficiently fatigued to be glad to be relieved from all difficulty but that of going straight forward as well as he could, and from all obligation to converse. He looked at his companion from time to time, fearing that he might drop from his horse; for Mitchelson, never strong, and exposed during the whole day to unusual fatigue, was ill prepared for an adventure like the present, and appeared utterly exhausted. Alfred looked about in vain for any place where they might stop for a few minutes to refresh themselves. There were none but clusters of negro-huts here and there, where all was silent and mo-

tionless, except that smoke curled up from the roofs in little white clouds as the silvery light fell upon them. Mitchelson would not hear of calling up any one to furnish a calabash of water, or any more substantial refreshment; and he seemed particularly uneasy while in the neighbourhood of these dwellings, starting whenever a bough dangled in the breeze, and casting a suspicious glance into the shadows as he urged his horse forwards. He appeared more in a hurry than ever, though he actually tottered in his saddle, as they came to a place which seemed to Alfred as if he had seen it before.

"Surely," said Alfred, "this is your own estate. Yes, that hut is Cassius's. You shall go no further till you have eaten and drunken, or I shall have you fainting by the road-side."

So saying, he dismounted, and fastened his horse to some palings at a little distance from the hut. Mitchelson tried by word and gesture to restrain him; but Alfred, who thought his companion in no condition to take care of himself, was decided.

"Fear nothing," he said, "Cassius and I are good friends, and it will give him pleasure to be of service to us."

He approached softly, and his footsteps were not heard, though Cassius was awake, and somewhat differently engaged from what might have been expected at such a time of night.

When Alfred reached the threshold, he thought he heard the murmurs of a voice within, and stepped round to the opening, which served for a

window, to observe for his guidance what was passing within. Cassius was alone: it was his voice that Alfred had heard. His night-fire was smouldering on the earthen floor, and he was kneeling beside it, his arms folded, his head drooped on his breast, except now and then when he looked up with eyes in which blazed a much brighter fire than that before him. A flickering blaze now and then shot up from the embers, and showed that his face was bathed with tears or perspiration, and that his strong limbs shook as if an icy wind was blowing upon him.

Alfred had often wondered, while in England, what Christianity could be like in a slave country. Since he arrived in Demerara he had heard tidings of the Christian teacher who had resided there for a time, which gave him a sufficiently accurate notion of the nature of his faith and of that of the planters; but he was still curious to know how the Gospel was held by the slaves. He had now an opportunity of learning, for Cassius was at prayer. These were snatches of his prayer.

“ May he sell no sugar, that no woman may die of the heat and hard work, and that her baby may not cry for her. If Christ came to make men free, let him send a blight that the crop may be spoiled; for when our master is poor, we shall be free. O Lord! make our master poor: make him sit under a tree and see his plantation one great waste. Let him see that his canes are dead, and that the wind is coming to blow down his house and his woods; and then he will say to

us, 'I have no bread for you, and you may go!' O, God! pity the women who cannot sleep this night because their sons are to be flogged when the sun rises. O, pity me, because I have worked so long, and shall never be free. Do not say to me, 'You shall never be free.' Why shouldst thou spare Horner who never spares us! Let him die in his sleep this night, and then there will be many to sing to thee instead of wailing all the night. We will sing like the birds in the morning if thou wilt take away our fear this night. If Jesus was here, he would speak kindly to us, and, perhaps, bring a hurricane for our sakes. O, do not help us less because he is with thee instead of with us! We have waited long, O Lord! we have not killed any one: we have done no harm, because thou hast commanded us to be patient. If we must wait, do thou give us patience; for we are very miserable, and our grief makes us angry. If we may not be angry, be thou angry with one or two, that a great many may be happy."

These words caught Alfred's ear amidst many which he could not hear. In deep emotion, he was about to beckon his companion to come and listen too, when he found he was already at his elbow.

"Stand and hear him out," whispered Alfred. "You will do him no harm, I am sure. You will not punish a man for his devotions, be their character what it may. Let Cassius be master for once. Let him teach us that which he understands better than we. He seems to have

thought more than you or I on what Christ would say to our authority if He were here. I will go in when he rises, and hear more."

"For God's sake, do not trust yourself with him. Let us go. Don't ask him for water, or anything else. I will have nothing,—I am going home this moment."

"Then I will follow," said Alfred, knocking at the door of the hut as soon as he saw that Cassius had risen and was about to replenish his fire.

"Cassius, I have overheard some of your prayers," he said, when he had explained to the astonished slave the cause of his appearance. "I was glad when you told me that you had been made a Christian; but your prayer is not that of a Christian. Surely this is not the way you were taught to pray?"

"We were told to pray for the miserable, and to speak to God as our Father, and tell him all that we wish. I know none so miserable as slaves, and therefore I prayed that there might be an end of their misery. I wish nothing so much as that I and all slaves may be free, and so I prayed for it. Is it wrong to pray for this?"

"No. I pray for the same thing, perhaps, as often as you; but——"

"Do you? Do you pray the same prayer as we do?" cried the slave, falling at Alfred's feet, and looking up in his face. "Then let us be your slaves, and we will all pray together."

"I wish to have no slaves, Cassius: I would rather you should be my servants, if you worked

for me at all. But we could not pray the same prayer while you ask for revenge. How dared you ask that the overseer might die, and that your master might be poor, and see his estate laid waste, when you know Jesus prayed for pardon for his enemies, and commanded us to do them good when we could?"

"Was it revenge?" asked Cassius. "I did not mean it for revenge; but I can never understand what prayer would best please God. I would not pray for my master's sorrow and Horner's death if it would do nobody any good, or even nobody but me; but when I know that there would be joy in a hundred cottages if there was death in the overseer's, may I not pray for the hundred families? And if I know that the more barren the land grows, the more the men will eat, and the women sing, and the children play, and the sooner I myself shall be free, may I not pray that the land may be barren? And as the land grows barren, my master grows poor. You know the Gospel better than I do. Explain this to me."

Alfred did his best to make it clear that, while blessings were prayed for, the means should be left to Divine wisdom: but though Cassius acquiesced and promised, it was plain he did not see why he should not take for granted the suitability of means which appeared to him so obvious. When Alfred heard what provocation he had just received, he had only wondered at the moderation of his petitions, and the patience with which he bore reproof. Horner had given him

notice the preceding evening, that as it appeared from his exertions at the mill-dam, that he was of more value than he had always pretended, his ransom should be doubled. In such a case, a prayer for such low prices as would lessen his own value was the most natural that could burst from the lips of a slave.

Alfred resolved, in his own mind, to obtain justice for Cassius, but refrained from exciting hopes which it might be out of his power to realize. He cheered the slave by accepting food and drink from him, and by imparting to him that luxury which it is to be hoped visits this class of beings more frequently than formerly,—sympathy. When Cassius came out to hold the stirrup for Alfred, he looked with a smile at the moon, and said that there would be time for himself to sleep before the gong should sound, and yet more for the gentleman, who need not mind the gong.

Alfred's horse had been grazing to such good purpose during the conversation with Cassius, that he carried his master home without another stumble.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROUD COVET PAUPERISM IN
DEMERARA.

It was well that Alfred had held out no expectation to Cassius that his ransom would be lowered, or to anybody that the overseer would be dismissed. Mr. Mitchelson was willing to promise everything to any person under whose influence he might be at the time ; but as fear had been his predominant passion ever since the days of the insurrection which once happened on his estate, and as Horner had found some means of making him afraid of him, there seemed little hope that any counter-influence would be of any avail. Alfred continued to hover about the plantation, however, and to give the slaves who had been exposed to increased hardship by his means, the protection of his occasional presence, till he was called away for a time, and obliged to leave his charge to the tender mercies of their enemy, while he undertook a yet more pressing responsibility. The Barbadoes' estate became his, and it was necessary that he should proceed to the spot.

" I wish I could make you think of returning to live with us, my dear son," said Mr. Bruce. " You see we cannot possibly break up our establishment and come to you. Why cannot you

arrange your concerns, and then leave them to an agent, like other people?"

"He will, I am sure," added his mother, "if he has any idea how we dread losing him. Mary, love, you have more influence than anybody with your brother; you can persuade him to return to us."

Mary looked up through her tears, while she replied that she believed her brother had long weighed the duty of living on his estate against other claims; and she hoped he would do what he thought right, and then it was certain he would come back if he could.

Alfred declared that it was a great grief to him to leave his family so soon, and that he should return as speedily and as often as possible to visit them; but that he could not promise to reside permanently anywhere but on his own estate.

His father observed that there were plenty of agents to be had, and that he was sorry some friends of his in England had prejudiced his son against management by agents.

Alfred observed that, believing, as he did, that the non-residence of proprietors was the curse of the West Indies, he could not conscientiously add his weight to the burden. Neither was he at all sure that he could afford the heavy expenses of agency, or that any of the plans for which he had been expressly educated could be fairly tried without his superintendence. Whatever might be the honesty and obedience of an agent, and however strong his own confi-

dence in one recommended by his father, it was impossible that any man should discern his views so clearly or take so warm an interest in their issue, as himself. It appeared to him that a critical period in the state of his slave population had arrived, and he could not forgive himself if he gave the management into other hands.

"I am glad you are aware," said his father, "that Barbadoes is little like Demerara. What you have seen here affords no rule for what you are to do there."

"One kind of rule, perhaps," said Alfred, smiling; "the rule of contrary. Here soils are fertile, there barren; here the slave population decreases as rapidly as it increases there; here slaves are very valuable, there they are worth little; here they are manumitted at the average of 27, there of 125 in a year, the impediment of a heavy tax remaining in each."

"Then you had rather have an estate in Barbadoes than here," said Mary, "whatever your profits may be?"

"Much rather. Slavery, like other institutions, is only enforced where it is worth enforcing; and since it is found less worth enforcing in Barbadoes than elsewhere, I shall meet with the less opposition to measures which I should have adopted wherever my estate had happened to lie. I do not despair of inducing some of my neighbours to make free labourers of their blacks, if, as I expect, they already find that they are of little value as slaves."

"The reason why they are so little valuable,"

said Mr. Bruce, "is that there is less sugar grown in Barbadoes than in any of the colonies which grow sugar at all."

"True," said Alfred. "The soil of Barbadoes produces less sugar; the planters therefore profit less by the bounty on sugars: they are less tempted to overwork their slaves, and to reduce their provision-grounds to the narrowest limits prescribed by law; the slaves therefore increase beyond the proportion wanted for the land, and of course obtain their freedom easily. The exact reverse is the case here. Here the most sugar is grown, the largest share of the bounty taken, the slaves most overworked and underfed, their numbers decreasing, their value increasing, and their freedom the most difficult to achieve."

Mary looked up from her work, observing that the bounty was then the great obstacle to emancipation.

"The one obstacle," replied her brother, "without which no other could stand for an hour. Louisa, my dear, bring me a map of the world."

"Of the world!" exclaimed the little girl; "I could show you the way to Barbadoes with a much smaller map than that."

"You shall teach me the way to Barbadoes afterwards; I want the larger map first. Look here, Mary. See here what the whole world owes to British legislation on the sugar trade! Let us first find out to what extent sugar might be grown if we had to consider climate only."

"I have always wondered," said Mary, "why

there was no sugar grown in Africa, or in any part of South America but the little angle we inhabit. So it might be anywhere within that line."

"Anywhere (as far as climate is concerned) within thirty degrees of the equator. There are duties which prohibit the English from purchasing sugar from China, New Holland, the Indian Archipelago, Arabia, Mexico, and all South America, but our little corner here; and from Africa none is to be had either. The slave-trade has destroyed all hope of that, independently of all restrictions. The slave-trade has been like a plague in Africa."

"Well, but you have passed over Hindostan."

"The trade is not absolutely prohibited there; but it is restricted and limited by high duties."

"What remains then?"

"Only our corner of the world, and a tiny territory it is, to be protected at the expense of such vast tracts—only the West India Islands, and a slip of the continent."

"But surely it is a hardship on the inhabitants of these other countries, to be prevented supplying the British with sugars?"

"It is a hardship to all parties in turn—to the British, that the price is artificially raised, and the quantity limited; to the inhabitants of these vast tracts, that they are kept out of the market; to the West India planters; but most of all, to the slaves."

"To the planters? Why, I thought it was for their sakes that the monopoly was ordered!"

"So it is; but they suffer far more than they

gain by it. The cultivation of sugar is at present a forced cultivation, attended with expense and hazard, and only to be maintained by a monopoly price, both high and permanent.

“Look at Mitchelson’s plantation, and see whether its aspect is that of a thriving property! A miserable hoe, used by men and women with the whip at their backs, the only instrument used in turning up the soil, while there are such things in the world as drill ploughs and cattle! A soil exhausted more and more every year! A population decreasing every year, in a land and climate most favourable to increase! Are these signs of prosperity? Yet all these are the consequence of a monopoly which tempts to the production of sugar at all hazards, and at every cost.”

“I see how all these evils would disappear, brother, if the trade were free; but could the proprietors stand the shock? Could they go through the transition?”

“O yes; if they chose to set about it properly, living on their own estates, and making use of modern improvements in the management of the land. If the soil were improved to the extent it might be, the West Indies might compete with any country in the world. The planter would estimate his property by the condition of his land, and not by the number of his slaves. He would command a certain average return from the effective labour he would then employ, instead of the capricious and fluctuating profits he now derives from a species of labour which it

is as impolitic as guilty to employ; and, as the demand for sugar would continually increase, after the effects of free competition had once been felt, there would be no fear of a decline of trade. A soil and climate like this are sufficient warrants that the West Indies may trade in sugar to the end of the world, if a fair chance is given by an open trade."

"Then if economy became necessary, there would be no slaves; for it is pretty clear that slave labour is dear."

"Slavery can only exist where men are scarce in proportion to land; and as the population would by this time have increased, and be increasing, slavery would have died out. At present, land is abundant, fertile, and cheap in Demerara, and labour decreases every year; so that slaves are valuable, and their prospect of emancipation but distant. But in my estate, as I have told you, the land is by far less fertile, labour more abundant, and slavery wearing out. My exertions will be directed towards improving my land, and increasing the supply of labour; by which I shall gain the double advantage of procuring labour cheap, and hastening the work of emancipation. I hope no new monopoly will be proposed, which should tempt me to change my plan, and aid and abet slavery."

"I can trust you," said Mary, smiling. "You would not yield to the temptation."

"I trust not, sister: but I will not answer for the effect of living long in a slave country. The very sight of slavery is corrupting, to say nothing

of the evil of holding property under the system. But I feel resolute enough at this moment."

"Remember, my dear son," said Mr. Bruce, "that you may find, as many find, that principles which seem very clear when only reasoned on, turn out very differently when applied to practice. There is your principle that you argue upon, as if it was a settled matter, that high prices stimulate supply——"

"Well, father, what of it? Is it not true, when things take their natural course?"

"I only know that it is not true here, if what you have been saying is true. The high prices you complain of lessen instead of increasing the supply of labour. Did not you say so?"

"I did; and I think the fact only shows that labour is not supplied in its natural course. You see the principle operates naturally upon the masters. It stimulates *them* to the production of sugar to such a degree as to ruin their soils; and if the supply of labour fails in proportion to the rise of prices, it proves,—not that a principle is false, which holds good everywhere else,—but that the peculiar kind of labour used here is not rightly held or naturally recompensed. This is only another of the many reversals of all allowed rules, which are so striking to those who watch West Indian policy from a distance. We might make another picture out of it for our new Topsy Turvy."

"I would make two pictures," said Mary. "John Bull comes with a high price in his hand to buy sugar of a free labourer, who works harder

and harder, grows rich, and employs a tribe of labourers under him. John Bull brings the same price to a slave. He pines and will not work: the price is lessened; he brightens, works, eats, and grows fat. It dwindles to nothing, and he leaps for joy, snaps his fingers in his master's face, and hugs John Bull with might and main."

Alfred laughed while he admitted this to be a true picture. In answer to an objection from his father, that slaves were not fit to employ and enjoy freedom, he mentioned the remarkable fact that scarcely any free blacks receive parish relief in comparison with whites, though their civil and political disabilities are such as to impose great hardships upon them. If, in an average of six years, including the whole of our West Indian colonies, it be found, (and it has been proved,) that out of a free black and coloured population of 88,000, only one in 387 has received even occasional parish relief, while, out of a white population of 63,400, one in 38 has been so relieved, it is pretty plain that the manumitted slaves are not too vicious or idle to take care of themselves; and there is an end to the common objection to manumission, that the freed slaves must increase the burden of pauperism.

It had frequently occurred to Alfred, that forebodings of pauperism came with a very ill grace from a body who subsist on the most expensive pauper establishment ever invented. The West India monopoly is a most burdensome poor-rate, levied by compulsion, and bestowed on those who ought to maintain themselves. It operates

as poor-rates always do, in producing discontents among those who pay, and indolence, recklessness, waste, and profligacy, among those who receive it, together with incessant and greedy demands for further assistance. The main difference is, that the West India paupers might and would flourish, if the mother country could be prevailed upon to withhold the alms so clamorously craved ; which is more, alas ! than can be said in the case of parish paupers. Alfred thought that this consideration would for ever strengthen him to stem the current of public opinion, which, however narrow and foul, runs so strongly in the West Indies as to require the force of a strong mind to keep its place in it. Happen what might, he could never submit to be a pauper.

He hoped, however, that the days of strong temptation were over,—that slavery was a perishing system,—a system that must perish ere long under any kind of management. High prices, rich lands, and scarcity of people, in conjunction, he argued, are the only supports of slavery.

High prices exhaust lands ; so there is a prospect of an end of slavery this way.

Moderate prices cause an increase of people ; so there is the same prospect this way.

Low prices only effect the same end more rapidly.

So, with a clear conviction that slavery must, at all events, come to an end, Alfred set sail for Barbadoes. The chief object of his going was to learn what he could do to hasten the wished-for day.

CHAPTER IX.

CALAMITY WELCOME IN DEMERARA.

THERE was every promise of a fine crop this season in Mr. Bruce's plantation. The coffee-walks had been refreshed by frequent showers, and were screened from the chill north winds; and the fruit looked so well that, as the owner surveyed his groves the day before the gathering began, he flattered himself with the hopes of a crop so much above the average as might clear off some of the debts which began to press heavily upon him.

His daughters remained at his side during the whole of this cheerful season; for Mary had but a faint remembrance, which she wished to revive, of its customs and festivities. The time of crop is less remarkable and less joyous in a coffee than a sugar plantation; but there is much in both to engage the eye and interest the heart. The sugar crop had been got in three months before, and Mary had then visited the Mitchells, and seen how marvellously the appearance of the working population, both man and beast, had improved in a very short time. Horses, oxen, mules, and even pigs, had fattened upon the green tops of the cane and upon the scum from the boiling-house; while the meagre and sickly among the slaves recovered their looks rapidly while they had free access to the nourish-

ing juice which oozed from the mill. The abundance of food more than made up for the increase of labour; and the slaves, while more hardly worked than ever, seemed to mind it less, and to wear a look of cheerfulness sufficiently rare at other seasons.

There was less apparent enjoyment to all parties at the time of gathering in the coffee, though it was a sight not to be missed by a stranger. The slaves could not grow fat upon the fruit of the coffee-tree as upon the juice of the cane; but as there was an extra allowance of food in consideration of the extra labour, the slaves went through it with some degree of willingness. The weather was oppressively hot, too; but Mary found it as tolerable in the shade of the walks as in the house. She sat there for hours, under a large umbrella, watching the slaves, as each slowly filled the canvass-bag hung round his neck, and kept open by a hoop. She followed them with her eyes when they sauntered from the trees to the baskets to empty their pouches, and then back again to the trees; and listened to the rebukes of the overseer when he found unripe fruit among the ripe.

"I am sure," said she to her father one day, "I should come in for many a scolding if I had to pick coffee to-day. If the heat makes us faint as we lie in the shade, what must it be to those who stand in the sun from morning till night! I could not lift a hand, or see the difference between one berry and another."

"Blacks bear the heat better than we do," observed Mr. Bruce. "However, it is really dreadfully sultry to day. I have seldom felt it so much myself, and I believe the slaves will be as glad as we when night comes."

"The little puffs of air that leave a dead calm," said Mary, "only provoke one to remember the steady breeze we did not know how to value when we had it. I should not care for a thunderstorm if it would but bring coolness."

"Would not you? You little know what thunderstorms are here."

"You forget how many we had in the spring."

"Those were no more like what we shall have soon, than a June night-breeze in England is like a January frost-wind. You may soon know, however, what a Demerara thunderstorm is like."

Mary looked about her as her father pointed, and saw that the face of nature was indeed changed. She had mentioned a thunderstorm because she had heard the overseer predict the approach of one.

There was a mass of clouds towering in a distant quarter of the heavens, not like a pile of snowy peaks, but now rent apart and now tumbled together, and bathed in a dull, red light. The sun, too, looked large and red, while distant objects wore a bluish cast, and looked larger and nearer than usual. There was a dead calm. The pigeon had ceased her cooing: no parrots were showing off their gaudy plumage in the sunlight, and not even the hum of the enamelled beetle was heard.

"What is the moon's age?" asked Mr. Bruce of the overseer.

"She is full to-night, sir, and a stormy night it will be I fear." He held up his finger and listened.

"Hark!" said Mary, "there is the thunder already."

"It is not thunder, my dear."

"It is the sea," said Louisa. "I never heard it here but once before; but I am sure it is the same sound."

"The sea at this distance!" cried Mary.

Her father shook his head, muttering, "God help all who are in harbour, and give them a breeze to carry them out far enough! The shore will be strewed with wrecks by the morning. Come, my dears, let us go home before yonder clouds climb higher."

The whites have not yet become as weather-wise, between the tropics, as the negroes; and both fall short of the foresight which might be attained, and which was actually possessed by the original inhabitants of these countries. A negro cannot, like them, predict a storm twelve days beforehand; but he is generally aware of its approach some hours sooner than his master. It depends upon the terms he happens to be on with the whites, whether or not he gives them the advantage of his observations.

Old Mark sent his daughter Becky to Mr. Bruce's house to deliver his opinion on the subject; but all were prepared. No such friendly warning was given to the Mitchelsons, who,

overcome with the heat, were, from the eldest to the youngest, lying on couches, too languid to lift up their heads or think of what might be passing out of doors. Cassius, meanwhile, was leaning over the gate of his provision-ground watching the moon as she rose, crimson as blood, behind his little plantain grove. Every star looked crimson too, and had its halo like the moon. It was as if a bloody steam had gone up from the earth. Not a breath of air could yet be felt; yet here and there a cedar, taller than the rest, stooped and shivered; and the clouds, now rushing, now poised motionless, indicated a capricious commotion in the upper air. Cassius was watching with much interest these signs of an approaching tempest, when he felt himself pulled by the jacket.

"May I stay with you?" asked poor Hester. "My master and mistress dare not keep at home because our roof is almost off already, and they think the wind will carry it quite away to-night."

"Where are they gone?"

"To find somebody to take them in; but they say there will be no room for me."

"Stay with me then; but nobody will be safe under a roof to-night, I think."

"Where shall we stay then?"

"Here, unless God calls us away. Many may be called before morning."

The little girl stood trembling, afraid of she scarcely knew what, till a tremendous clap of thunder burst near, and then she clung to Cas-

sus, and hid her face. In a few moments the gong was heard, sounding in the hurried irregular manner which betokens an alarm.

"Aha!" cried Cassius. "The white man's house shakes and he is afraid."

"What does he call us for?" said the terrified child. "We can do him no good."

"No; but his house is stronger than ours; and if his shakes, ours may tumble down, and then he would lose his slaves and their houses too. So let us go into the field where we are called, and then we shall see how pale white men can look."

All the way as they went, Hester held one hand before her eyes, for the lightning flashes came thick and fast. Still there was neither wind nor rain; but the roar of the distant sea rose louder in the intervals of the thunder.

Cassius suddenly stopt short, and pulled the little girl's hand from before her face, crying, "Look, look, there is a sight!"

Hester shrieked when she saw a whole field of sugar-canes whirled in the air. Before they had time to fall, the loftiest trees of the forest were carried up in like manner. The mill disappeared, a hundred huts were levelled; there was a stunning roar, a rumbling beneath, a rushing above. The hurricane was upon them in all its fury.

Cassius clasped the child round the waist, and carried rather than led her at his utmost speed beyond the verge of the groves, lest they also should be borne down and crush all beneath them. When he had arrived with his charge in

the field whither the gong had summoned him, slaves were arriving from all parts of the plantation to seek safety in an open place. Their black forms flitting in the mixed light,—now in the glare of the lightning, and now in the rapid gleams which the full moon cast as the clouds were swept away for a moment, might have seemed to a stranger like imps of the storm, collecting to give tidings of its ravages. Like such imps they spoke and acted.

“The mill is down!” cried one.

“No crop next year, for the canes are blown away!” shouted another.

“The hills are bare as a rock,—no coffee, no spice, no cotton! Hurra!”

“But our huts are gone: our plantation-grounds are buried,” cried the wailing voice of a woman.

“Hurra! for the white man’s are gone too!” answered many mingled tones. Just then a burst of moonlight showed to each the exulting countenances of the rest, and there went up a shout louder than the thunder,—“Hurra! hurra! how ugly is the land!”

The sound was hushed, and the warring lights were quenched for a time by the deluge which poured down from the clouds. The slaves crouched together in the middle of the field, supporting one another as well as they could against the fury of the gusts which still blew, and of the tropical rains. An inquiry now went round,—where was Horner? It was his duty to be in the field as soon as the gong had sounded,

but no one had seen him. There was a stern hope in every heart that his roof had fallen in and buried him and his whip together. It was not so, however.

After a while, the roaring of water was heard very near, and some of the blacks separated from the rest to see in what direction the irregular torrents which usually attend a hurricane were taking their course. There was a strip of low ground between the sloping field where the negroes were collected and the opposite hill, and through the middle of this ground a river rushed along where a river had never been seen before. A tree was still standing here and there in the midst of the foaming waters, and what had, a few minutes ago, been a hillock with a few shrubs growing out of it, was now an island. The negroes thought they heard a shout from this island, and then supposed it must be fancy; but when the cloudy rack was swept away and allowed the moon to look down for a moment, they saw that some one was certainly there, clinging to the shrubs, and in imminent peril of being carried away if the stream should continue to rise. It was Horner, who was making his way to the field when the waters overtook him in the low ground, and drove him to the hillock to seek a safety which was likely to be short enough. The waters rose every moment: and though the distance was not above thirty feet from the hillock to the sloping bank on which the negroes had now ranged themselves to watch his fate, the waves dashed through in so furious a current

that he did not dare to commit himself to them. He called, he shouted, he screamed for help, his agony growing more intense, as inch after inch, foot after foot, of his little shore disappeared. The negroes answered his shouts very punctually; but whether the impatience of peril prompted the thought, or an evil conscience, or whether it were really so, the shouts seemed to him to have more of triumph than sympathy in them; and cruel as would have been his situation had all the world been looking on with a desire to help, it was dreadfully aggravated by the belief that the wretches whom he had so utterly despised were watching his struggles, and standing with folded arms to see how he would help himself when there was none to help him. He turned and looked to the other shore; but it was far too distant to be reached. If he was to be saved, it must be by crossing the narrower gulley; and, at last, a means of doing so seemed to offer. Several trees had been carried past by the current; but they were all borne on headlong, and he had no means of arresting their course: but one came at length, a trunk of the largest growth, and therefore making its way more slowly than the rest. It tilted from time to time against the bank, and when it reached the island, fairly stuck at the very point where the stream was narrowest. With intense gratitude,—gratitude which two hours before he would have denied could ever be felt towards slaves,—Horner saw the negroes cluster about the root of the tree to hold it firm in its position. Its branchy head seemed to him

to be secure, and the only question now was, whether he could keep his hold on this bridge, while the torrent rose over it, as if in fury at having its course delayed. He could but try, for it was his only chance. The beginning of his adventure would be the most perilous, on account of the boughs over and through which he must make his way. Slowly, fearfully, but firmly he accomplished this, and the next glimpse of moonlight showed him astride on the bare trunk, clinging with knees and arms, and creeping forward as he battled with the spray. The slaves were no less intent. Not a word was spoken, not one let go, and even the women would have a hold. A black cloud hid the moon just when Horner seemed within reach of the bank; and what happened in that dark moment,—whether it was the force of the stream, or the strength of the temptation,—no lips were ever known to utter; but the event was that the massy trunk heaved once over, the unhappy wretch lost his grasp, and was carried down at the instant he thought himself secure. Horrid yells once more arose, from the perishing man, and from the blacks now dispersed along the bank to see the last of him.

“He is not gone yet,” was the cry of one; “he climbed yon tree as if he had been a water-rat.”

“There let him sit if the wind will let him,” cried another. “That he should have been carried straight to a tree after all!”

“Stand fast! here comes the gale again!” shouted a third.

The gale came. The tree in which Horner had found refuge bowed, cracked,—but before it fell, the wretch was blown from it like a flake of foam, and swallowed up finally in the surge beneath. This was clearly seen by a passing glean.

“Hurra! hurra!” was the cry once more. “God sent the wind. It was God that murdered him, not we.”

When the planters were sufficiently recovered to exchange letters of condolence, Mr. Mitchellson wrote thus to Mr. Bruce. “You have probably heard that my overseer, poor Horner, was lost from the waters being out when he was making his way to the field where his duty called him. We all lament him much; but your son will be glad to hear (pray tell him when you write) that my slaves are conducting themselves as well as if still under the charge of him we have lost. I am persuaded they would have risked their own lives to save his, if it had been possible. But, as they say, it was God’s will that he should perish!”

CHAPTER X.

PROTECTION IS OPPRESSION IN DEMERARA.

THE external devastation which attends a hurricane is by no means the only evil it brings. Where there is any difficulty in the management

of affairs, public or private, it is sure to be increased or made insurmountable by any general excuse for aggression or rebellion. Many an insurrection has taken place during or immediately after a hurricane. Many a half-ruined planter has found his embarrassments brought to a crisis by the crowd of demands which are hastened instead of deferred by disaster. This was now Mr. Bruce's case.

As soon as this gentleman had seen the destruction of all the hopes he had built on his coffee-crop, he began to fear a seizure of his slaves by his creditors. He assembled them within an inclosure as fast as possible, and erected his fences, and had them guarded with the utmost care, that he might at all events exempt his human property from a legal seizure. But his precautions were vain. Some gap was found, or pretended to be found, through which the officers entered in the night, and levied slaves for the benefit of his creditors. This was sad news for the breakfast-table ; and as Mr. Bruce was really a kind-hearted man, it added to his concern that, in the confusion of the seizure and in the darkness of midnight, the slaves had been carried off without the usual care being taken not to separate families : for some regard is paid to this consideration in the absence of temptation to overlook it. Old Mark's household, among others, had been divided. Becky was this morning sitting in grief beside her aged father, while Willy and Nell (whose lover had been left behind) were marching, in sullen despair, with drivers at

their backs, they knew not whither, to become the property of they knew not whom.

It would have been hard to say among what class of persons the deepest distress prevailed in consequence of this hurricane, which the revengeful impulses of the blacks had made them for a moment hail as a friend. The slaves who were levied for their master's debts mourned as if they were carried anew into a strange land: their friends at home wept for them more bitterly than if they had been dead; for they were gone to renew their mortal sorrows instead of finding peace and freedom in the better land beyond the grave. Cassius's heart was burning within him because the prospect of freedom, of late so hopeful though not very near, was now removed for ever, or to so great a distance as to leave him in despair. He was to be sold; and it would be long before the value of slaves, now considerably raised by the event which had happened, would be so lowered as to admit of a hope of obtaining ransom. Cassius's earnings being found to be greater than was expected, his price was considerably raised, and he was placed first in the lot of marketable slaves on Mitchelson's estate.

The master, meanwhile, was lamenting the loss of his factotum, Horner, and indolently dreading the difficulties of making new arrangements, and doing some things himself which he had been accustomed to leave to his overseer. But his distress was nothing compared with his friend, Mr. Bruce's. In perpetual fear of arrest, he dared not go out of doors to see what had

happened and what must be done. He delayed from day to day looking into his affairs, suspecting that he should find total ruin at the bottom. He resisted, partly through shame, and partly through tenderness for Alfred, every entreaty to send for his son and to bring his affairs to a certain issue. He wrote, "do not think of coming" in every letter; but it chanced one day that Mary found an opportunity of putting in a postscript to this effect: "Notwithstanding what my father says about your remaining where you are, I think, and so does my mother, that it would do him a world of good to see you. He grows more anxious every day, and there is nobody here who can help to comfort him as you could." Upon this hint Alfred appeared. He little thought how the other suffering parties we have mentioned had cast a longing look towards him, as the friend most likely to aid them, or to sorrow with them if he could not assist.

"Our young master would have Willy and Nell brought back if he was here," observed Becky to her father.

"Mr. Alfred would not let my ransom be raised, or may be he would buy me himself, now he has an estate," sighed Cassius.

"I would persuade Alfred to train my new overseer, and advise me what to do, if I could get at him," observed Mitchelson. "He did wonders at that mill-dam, and I am sure he would do no less now."

So when Alfred appeared, a gleam of pleasure passed over many a heavy countenance.

"My dear son!" exclaimed Mr. Bruce. "We are always glad to see you. Who is not? But you have come at the very best moment. There is to be a meeting of planters to-morrow. You cannot think how I dread appearing; and now you will go instead of me. It is necessary that this estate should be represented; and you may truly say that I am too ill to appear in person."

Alfred was ready to be useful in any way; but urged the necessity of his being fully informed respecting his father's affairs before he could act as his proxy. He begged that this day might be devoted to an inspection of the accounts. Mr. Bruce groaned; but on this point his son was firm. The two gentlemen and the agent whom Mr. Bruce's indolence had induced him to employ, were closeted for the rest of the day with their books and papers.

Mrs. Bruce lay sighing and weeping the whole day, offering a passive resistance to all the comfort her daughter endeavoured to bestow. In the evening, Mary left her for a few minutes, to seek the refreshment of the cool air of the garden. She remained within sight of the room where the inquiry was going forward on which so much depended; looking up to the windows every moment as if she could learn anything by that means of the probable fate of the family. At last she saw somebody moving within: it was Alfred who came to the window, saw her, made a sign to her to remain where she was, and presently was drawing her arm within his own,

and leading her where they could not be overheard.

Alfred explained that his father was indeed deep in debt, but that his incumbrances might be cleared off by good management, as they had only been brought on by indolence and waste. If his father would dismiss his agent, and conduct his affairs himself; if he would introduce a better division of labour, and a greater economy of the resources of the estate, all might be redeemed within a few years.

"Can I do nothing to assist?" Mary anxiously inquired. "I know I can introduce economy into our household arrangements, for my mother leaves them more and more to me: but can I help my father as well?"

"You may, by taking an interest in what ought to be his business. Go with him sometimes when he superintends in the field, and show him that you understand accounts, and keep an eye upon the books. You know as much of accounts as I do, and let him see that he may trust you."

"I may thank Mrs. H—— for teaching me this part of a woman's business," said Mary. "She managed the fortunes of her five children from the day of her husband's death till their majority, and I am thankful that she taught me what may now be so useful. I may learn the values of coffee in time; and in the meanwhile I will make use of what I know of that of pounds, shillings, and pence."

"It is no mean knowledge, sister, since, in your case, the happiness of some hundreds of

human beings is affected by it. The fate of our slaves depends on the state of my father's affairs. I commend their comfort to you. Soften their hardships as much as your influence allows, and then my father will soon find that their happiness and his prosperity go together."

"O, Alfred! have I any power,—any responsibility of this kind? It makes me tremble to think of it."

"If ladies have been frequently cited to answer the complaints of slaves, (which you know to be the case,) it is clear that they have influence over the fate of these unhappy dependants. If the wife of a planter has been imprisoned for torturing a slave, why should not the daughter of a planter use her influence to save her father's slaves from punishment, or, better still, keep them from deserving it?"

"I have been with old Mark to-day," said Mary, "and I have been trying all means I could think of to get Becky to complain to my father, instead of the Protector, about Sunday labour: but she is so fierce, I can make nothing of her. She never said a word about it while she had her brother with her, but she declares she must make her complaints for herself now he is gone. I dread the exposure, and she might get redress from my father, I am sure."

Alfred had heard with grief that Willy and Nell were among the levied slaves. What his sister now said determined him to seek out old Mark and his daughter without delay; and the brother and sister were soon at the door of the hut.

Mark was sitting in the only chair the hut contained, talking as if to people round him, though he was alone. Alfred immediately saw that the little light of intellect which old age had left was quenched. The cause of this was evident from his taking every man who came near him for Willy, and every woman for Nell.

"How much did you sell the pig for?" he asked Alfred. "He brought a good price, for your clothes are as fine as a white's.—But," suddenly recollecting himself, "how did you get back? O, you will be flogged for a runaway."

"This is Mr. Alfred. You remember your young master, Mr. Alfred?"

"Ah! Mr. Alfred is come to your wedding, Nell. Why, my wife did not look as pretty as you on her wedding-day. And who married you, and why did not you let me go to your wedding? Becky said you could not be married because they had carried you away, but now you are back again, I will sing you a song I made for you and Harry."

Presently the old man broke off singing in a great passion.

"Willy, you are a dog to bring me no water when I am so thirsty;" and he shook a stick at his young master.

Alfred humoured him and took down a calabash, and was filling it with water when Becky came home.

"See, Becky, what it is to be married!" cried the old man. "When will you be as fine as Nelly?"

Becky made no answer, but snatched the calabash from Alfred's hand, and served her father herself.

"You would not believe that I could save you from Sunday labour, Becky," said Mary. "Here is my brother: you had better make your complaint to him."

Becky was so far from being reserved, as she had been in the morning, about this complaint, that she poured out her grievances as fast as she could speak, and far faster than Alfred could understand her. The fact was, she had applied to the Protector of slaves, and he had dismissed her complaint as frivolous and vexatious, because she owned that she had frequently gone through an equal portion of Sunday labour without complaint. She was now furious against all parties, and would scarcely hold her tongue long enough to hear Alfred say that he thought her's a hard case, and only blamed her for not having complained long before.

It appeared that the overseer was in the habit of appointing a heavier task on Saturdays than other days, and of compelling the completion of it on the Sunday. It was evident that, if he chose to appoint a double task on the Saturday, the negroes might be deprived altogether of the benefit of the Sunday: and the young people thought that one such attempt to evade the law on the part of the overseer was enough to warrant his immediate dismissal, if it could be proved against him; and that the Protector of slaves could be little fit for his office, if he made the

frequent repetition of a grievance the reason for not redressing it. Becky smiled incredulously when Alfred promised that he would come, next Sunday morning, and see whether she was at work or at leisure; and if the former, on what pretence.

He had some hope of being able by that time to make some arrangement for the return of the brother and sister, as he was to meet their present owner at the assembly of planters on the Wednesday; but the event disappointed him. Everything went wrong at the meeting. He dissented entirely from the prayer of the petition to government which had been agreed on; he disapproved of the tone of indignant complaint assumed by the planters, and failed in his endeavour to convince some of them that the remedy for their grievances rested with themselves. He had laid his accounts for being treated as a visionary, and for his own plans being laughed at as absurd; but he was not prepared for being put down because his father's affairs were known to be in a bad state; or for the insulting mirth with which all humane suggestions were received, even while the name of Providence was on every tongue. But nothing disgusted him so much as the apathy with which his father's principal creditor turned from the offer of a negotiation about the restoration of Willy and Nell. There seemed no hope of effecting their return; and the only prospect he could hold out to Becky was that of joining them whenever the death of her father should release her from her attendance upon

him ; and this could be done only by sacrificing her lover, as her sister had been compelled to do by force.

CHAPTER XI.

BEASTS HUNT MEN IN DEMERARA.

THE absent brother and sister were less willing to relinquish the hope of return. Upon this hope they had lived from the moment of their departure : they saw it in each other's eyes, while their captivity was too new to allow them an opportunity of speaking of it ; and they kept it alive by sympathy when some relaxation of discipline allowed them to exchange a whisper from time to time. They planned to escape in the night, to take refuge in the woods, and subsist there as well as they could till the search should be over, and they could find their way back to Mr. Bruce's estate, and throw themselves at their master's feet to petition for such an exchange of slaves as would allow them to remain in their old habitation. They had no thought of evading slavery altogether. They had no means of leaving the coast, or of obtaining their freedom within it. The utmost they hoped was to spend a life of slavery under a lenient master, and among those they had long known, and could love : a wish

not so very immoderate or presumptuous, it may be thought, as to merit very severe chastisement. Yet they knew that no punishment would be thought too heavy, if they should be detected in cherishing this hope.

One afternoon, they and their black brethren on the estate were left unguarded, owing to the sudden illness of the driver, who fell down in the field and was carried home in fits. A glance instantly passed from Willy to Nell, and joy was in their hearts that an opportunity of escape should occur so much sooner than they had expected. There was no roll-call that night. If there had been, the brother and sister would have been called in vain, for they were already on their perilous way to the woods. Nobody missed them: they met nobody as they proceeded in the shade till sunset, and over the plain in the twilight, till they reached the forest. They did not know their way any further than they had been able to study it by observing the stars. They were to travel northward when the time should come for them to proceed to Mr. Bruce's; but their immediate object was to escape pursuit: and as pursuit would most probably be directed where it would be guessed they wished to go, they turned due west for the present, as soon as they could make out the points of the compass by the lights overhead. They pushed on at their utmost speed, disregarding cold, hunger, and the difficulties of the way. They hastily plucked wild fruit when it hung within reach, now creeping through thick underwood, now

helping one another over fragments of rock, and never stopped till day began to dawn. Then Nell cast herself down on the ground, and besought her brother to let her rest. He now observed for the first time that one of her feet was covered with blood, and frightfully swollen. A large thorn had pierced it some hours before, and as she had in her hurry let it remain, it was buried too deep to be easily got out, and she was so lame as to be unable to go farther.

Willy looked round anxiously, and walked from side to side to gaze abroad and see whether this spot was easily accessible from any quarter. He came back presently with a more cheerful countenance, saying,

"The bushes are thick all round us, and the wood is very wild; and there is fruit on the trees, and a little river near, where we may drink. If we could but hide ourselves as long as the sun is up, we might be safe for many days."

"Cannot we pile up these big stones to make a hiding-place, Willy? Set them one upon another against this bank, and leave a hole behind where we may creep in."

Willy found this not very difficult. The hiding place looked outside like a natural heap of fragments of rock, while behind there was a hole large enough for two people to sit upright; and when some dry grass was shaken down to make the ground soft, the runaway slaves thought they could be content to remain in this narrow dwelling for a long time. Willy laughed as he had

not laughed since childhood, when he leaned back in his dark corner, and Nell smiled as much as the pain of her foot would let her. Hope had already done her heart good. Twenty-four hours sooner she would have made everybody near her melancholy with her groans, for slaves are fond of pity, and are made selfish by their wrongs; but now, Nell began to feel like a free-woman. She could procure no indulgence by complaint, and she was grateful to her brother for his assistance in making her escape. She therefore hoped that he would sleep, and remained quite quiet that she might not hinder his doing so. Perhaps she would have attempted to sing a drowsy song, if she had not been afraid of betraying their retreat by permitting any sound to issue from it.

Her fit of patience lasted longer than might have been expected from such a novice in the virtue. For a few hours she sat bearing the pain very well, and she might possibly have endured for another if she had not heard, or fancied she heard, a sound which made her heart throb as painfully as her foot. The woods reposed in all the stillness of noon, or she would have supposed the sound to be some freak of the wind among the high foliage of the forest; but there was no wind, there was nothing to provoke an echo; and her ears were struck by something too like the distant, the very distant baying of a hound. She laid her hand on her brother's arm. He did not stir. She paused to listen again before she disturbed him. She had

not long to wait. It came again, nearer, and too distinct to be mistaken. She shook the sleeper.

"Willy, Willy! hark to the hounds! The hounds are after us!"

Willy groaned as he started up, and shook some of the stones overhead, which rolled down with a great clatter.

"Never mind that, Nell. We could not keep under cover with the hounds upon us. O, if we had but passed a stream in our way! If we could but have baniked the hounds!"

"There is a river below," cried Nell; and Willy was off at the word.

"O, Willy, Willy, do not leave me! I cannot walk. O, carry me with you!"

Willy hesitated a moment as his worse and better nature strove together. He came back for his sister, took her on his back, and began to scramble down to the stream. It was too late, however. The shouts of men were now heard mingling with the loud and louder baying of the blood-hounds, which might be expected the next moment to spring from the bushes upon their victims. There was no hope of getting down to the stream in time, much less of being hidden on the opposite side. Willy cast a hurried look behind him every moment; and when at last he heard a rustling in the underwood, and saw fierce eyes glaring upon him, he laid his burden on the grass, crying,

"Nell, will you die or be a slave?"

Nell grovelled on the earth and made no answer.

"I will die!" shouted Willy, and was about to spring into the water. His sister recalled him by her cry.

"Becky; poor Becky! She will be all alone when our father dies."

Willy turned. What his choice would have been cannot be known, for there was no time for choice. Before the slave-hunters could come up to see what happened, a fierce blood-hound had sprung at Willy's throat and brought him down. Once having tasted blood, the animal was not to be restrained by whistle, shouts or blows, till the long death-grapple was over. When the mangled negro had ceased to struggle, and lay extended in his blood, the hound slunk back into the bushes, licking his chops, and growling at Nell as if he would make another spring if he dared.

The remaining fugitive had no power to resist, even if she had had the will. But her will was annihilated. She had nothing to hope or to fear in the present extremity of bodily and mental misery. She sat quietly on the grass when they tied her hands behind her back. She attempted to walk when she was bid, and submitted to be carried when it was found she could not stand. She did not speak when they took up the body of her brother from its bloody bed, nor start when they tossed it into the stream, though splashed by the plunge.

She was conscious but of one passing impulse

during her journey back,—to throttle the man on whose shoulders she was carried, as the hound had throttled her brother: but the effort only served to remind her that her arms were fastened. She was asleep or in a stupor when brought back to her hut, a circumstance which was pointed out by a white as conclusive of the fact that negroes have no feeling. As she was too lame to work, however, and not in the best condition for the lash, she was not roused. There was some mercy in leaving her to find out for herself, when she should again be able to collect her disordered thoughts, that the brand and the stocks were waiting for her, and that the days of her bondage must henceforth be spent alone.

CHAPTER XII.

NO MASTER KNOWS HIS MAN IN DEMERARA.

THOUGH Alfred was mortified at the event of his meeting with the planters, he had reason to be satisfied on the whole with the result of his present visit to Demerara. Now that poor Horner's opposition was at an end, it became comparatively easy to carry two or three measures about Mitchelson's slaves that Alfred had much at heart.

"I cannot give up the point of Cassius's freedom," said he to Mitchelson. "I feel myself pledged in honour to obtain it."

"In honour! I will spare your honour, my young friend, and never think the worse of you if you forgot Cassius from this day."

"You!" exclaimed Alfred in astonishment.

"I am not pledged to you but to Cassius."

"And what should Cassius know about honour?" asked Mitchelson, laughing.

"Call it humanity, if you please. Cassius knows what humanity is; or, at any rate, what liberty is: and since my employing him at the mill-dam was the means at once of exciting his hopes and raising his ransom, I cannot lose sight of him till I lose sight of the vessel in which he shall be sailing to Africa."

"You must keep a sharp look out then; for he may be marched off south, or west, or east any day. I can make nothing of him, and shall not keep him."

"South, or west, or east! I thought you said he was promised to a planter in the neighbourhood?"

"He was; but the bargain is off. The fellow was so idle and mulish the day that I wanted him to show to the best advantage, that my friend will not have him, unless for a lower price than I mean to accept."

"You had better take his ransom as it was first fixed, and let him go. You will make nothing of him at home or in the market after what he has gone through lately."

"I am quite of your opinion, and would end the business at once, but that a neighbour has

been talking to me about it, and convincing me that it would be wrong."

"Wrong! how should it be wrong?"

"We planters determined long ago never to admit the right of slaves to purchase their freedom. We mean to keep it optional on our part whether to sell them or not, in the same manner as we deny the right of any one to make us sell any other articles of our property. Now, so much has been said about this particular slave, Cassius, that my neighbours are afraid that, if I let him go, advantage will be taken of the case to represent that we can be obliged to part with our slaves, like the Spanish planters. So you see that, in justice to the West India interest, I must refuse Cassius his freedom."

"I remember," replied Alfred, "that some reforms specified by an Order in Council were objected to on the ground you have stated; and the declaration is of a piece with all the declarations with which government is insulted by the landholders here. But though your neighbours disregard equally the law of nature, the law of God, and the ordinances of the government under which they live, they admit, I believe, the conventional law of honour, of which you think Cassius can know nothing; they admit that a gentleman must keep a promise, deliberately made, and often repeated."

"A promise to a gentleman, certainly. Promises to slaves are nothing, you know, if circumstances alter, as they have done in this case. The usages of society, for whose sake alone

promises are made binding, bear no relation to slaves."

"True enough," said Alfred, smiling. "I take you at your word, Mr. Mitchelson. You have deliberately and repeatedly promised *me* that Cassius should ransom himself at a certain sum. That sum is now ready, and if you refuse to take it and let the man go, I will expose your breach of promise to every planter in Demerara."

"My dear Alfred! How strange of you to treat an old friend so ceremoniously!"

"If you will not grant my claim in a friendly way, I must urge it ceremoniously. Tell me in so many words, do you mean to keep your promise or break it?"

"I declare I am quite at a loss what to do. My neighbours fully understand that the ransom is refused."

"That shall be no difficulty. I will tell them that I have recalled to your memory a positive promise to myself. I will take care of your honour towards them, if you will take care of it towards myself. And now let us go and finish this business."

"I am sure, my dear young friend, it always gives me the greatest pleasure to oblige you, and besides——"

Alfred stopped short as he was walking, and said, "We must understand one another better before we have done. I cannot allow you to think that you are doing an act of favour. It is an act of very tardy justice to Cassius, and of ungracious necessity towards myself. I am very

sorry to speak thus to an old friend, Mr. Mitchelson; and no interests of my own should make me thus fight my ground inch by inch; but for the sake of the slaves I must deny that it is any matter of favour to let a slave go free when he offers his stipulated ransom."

Mitchelson muttered something about his being unable to cut fine like his accomplished young friend.

"You cut fine just now," replied Alfred, "on behalf of the planters; you must allow me to do the same on behalf of the slaves."

They presently reached the spot where Cassius was seemingly at work with others who were repairing the devastation caused by the hurricane. Alfred asked Cassius whether he still had money to buy his ransom as at first fixed. He had. How soon could he bring it in his hand and buy his freedom? "Presently; in an hour; in five minutes," the slave said, as he saw the benevolent smile broadening on Alfred's face.

"Fetch it then, and you and I will not part till you sail away over the blue sea yonder. Mr. Mitchelson, we will join you again presently, and conclude the business."

"You are not going with him, Alfred? He will return sooner without you."

But Alfred determined to lose sight of his charge no more till they should have quitted Paradise.

Cassius walked so rapidly that Alfred could scarcely keep up with him. On reaching his hut, a part of which had fallen in during the

hurricane, he put his spade into Alfred's hands, pointing to a place where a heap of rubbish lay. He fetched another spade for himself from a neighbour's hut, and began to dig among the rubbish with might and main. Alfred worked as hard as he, and neither had yet spoken a word. They first uncovered the bed of planks and mat on which the slave had spent so many nights of desolate grief, and which had been so often watered with his tears. Cassius, by a sudden impulse, kicked these to as great a distance as he could, snatched up a burning stick from his fire, and kindled them. As the flame shot up, he danced and sang till the last chip and shred were burned. He then spat upon the ashes and returned to his work.

A little way under ground, beneath where the bed had stood, a leathern pouch appeared. Cassius seized it, showed Alfred with a rapid and significant gesture that it was full of coin, and marched straight towards the entrance of his garden.

"Stay a moment," said Alfred, laying his hand on his shoulder; "you are not aware that you will never come back to this place again. Is there nothing here, nothing of your own, that you wish to take with you? No clothes, no tools, or utensils?"

Cassius looked about him with an expression of intense disgust.

"Be prudent, Cassius. Your clothes and your tools will not be the less useful to you in Liberia because they belonged to you as a slave."

Cassius slowly returned and took up a few articles, but presently seemed much disposed to throw them into the fire.

"Well, well," said Alfred, "leave them where they are, and if your master does not allow you the value of them, I will. Now take one more look at the dwelling where you have lived so long, and then let us be gone."

Cassius had, however, no sentimental regrets to bestow on the abode of his captivity. He refused the last look, and strode away as an escaped malefactor from the gibbet, without any wish to look back. The first words he spoke were uttered as he passed old Robert's hut.

"Little Hester will cry when she comes home and finds that I am gone. Can you do nothing for poor little Hester, Mr. Alfred?"

This was exactly what Alfred was turning over in his mind.

When Cassius had told down his ransom with Alfred's assistance, when the necessary forms of business were gone through, and the variety of coins which the pouch contained were fairly transferred to Mitchelson, Alfred said,

"Now that our affair of justice is concluded, I am going to bring forward a matter of pure favour." Mr. Mitchelson, who liked granting favours better than doing justice, looked very gracious. Alfred explained, that by Cassius's departure, Hester would lose her only friend. He begged that she might be taken from under the charge of Robert and Sukey, and placed with some one who would treat her kindly, and that

Mr. Mitchelson would himself inquire after the friendless little girl from time to time.

"With the utmost pleasure, Alfred. I shall always pay particular attention, I am sure, to objects that interest you. But would you like to purchase her? I am sorry that I cannot offer, in the present state of my affairs, to give her to you; but the demand shall be moderate if you are disposed to purchase her."

Alfred was also sorry that the state of his own and his father's affairs was not such as could justify his purchasing slaves. He would fain have made this child free; but as he could not, he consoled himself with the hope that he had secured better treatment for her till he might be able to render her a higher benefit still. Mr. Mitchelson passed his word of honour that she should that day be removed to the dwelling of a gentle-tempered woman, who had lately lost a daughter of about Hester's age.

"Have you nothing to say to me, Cassius?" asked Mr. Mitchelson, as Cassius was turning his back for ever upon his master's mansion. "Have you no farewell for me, so long as we have lived together?"

No, not any. Cassius cared little for good manners just at this moment, and was only in haste to be gone.

"Lived together!" said Alfred to himself, as he quitted Paradise. "These slaveholders never dream that they may not use the language of the employers of a free and reasonable service. An English gentleman may speak to his household

servants of the time they have 'lived together;' but it is too absurd from the slaveholder who despises his slave to the degraded being who hates his owner."

Mitchelson meanwhile was wondering as much at Alfred, thinking, as he watched them from the steps of his mansion,—

"That young man is a perfect Quixote, or he could never see anything to care about in such a sullen brute as Cassius. I am glad I was never persuaded to send any of my children to England. No man is fit to be a West Indian planter who has had what is called a good education in England."

As Alfred was crossing his father's estate on his way home, he met the overseer looking angry, and with his anger was mingled some grief. He was very ready to tell what was the matter. He had just heard of the "unfortunate accident," by which Willy had been torn to pieces by bloodhounds. When Alfred had made two strange discoveries, he saw that nothing was to be made of the overseer, and rode on. One discovery was, that the man's anger was against Willy himself for the attempt at escape; the other, that he had just blurted out the whole story to Mark in Becky's absence. Of course Alfred lost no time in seeing if he could comfort the old man.

Mark was still alone when they went in, rocking himself in his chair, and apparently aware of what had happened, for he was singing, in a faint wailing voice, a funeral song in his own tongue.

He stopped when Alfred entered the hut, Cassius remaining outside, and before he could be prevented, rose from his seat, saying,

"I am ready for the burial. I see them waiting for me outside. Don't stop me; I am ready for the burial."

In attempting to move forwards, he fell heavily.

"Help, help!" cried Alfred to his companion.

"Lay him on the mat: sprinkle water on his face; chafe his hands!"

It was too late. He was gone. He was indeed "ready for the burial." Alfred waited for Becky that he might give her the only comfort in his power, in the hope that, now her filial cares were ended, she might join her sister by the exchange of the one or the other.

"Cassius has been climbing every hour since sunrise, to where he may see the sea," said Mr. Bruce, laughing, to Alfred, on the day preceding his return to Barbadoes. "He is like a school-boy going home for the holidays."

"To compare great things with small," added Alfred.

"So you ship him with a party of your own, and your neighbour's liberated slaves, for Liberia. How did you get leave? How did you gain any interest with the American Colonization Society?"

"Our object being the same, father, there was no difficulty in coming to an understanding. We planters take upon ourselves the expense of transportation, and the society receives our free blacks under the protection of its agent at Liberia."

"And what do you suppose will become of them there?"

"That which has become of the free blacks of the United States who are settled there. They will labour, and prosper and be happy. They will become farmers, planters, merchants, or tradespeople. They will make their own laws, guard their own rights, and be as we are, men and citizens."

"Do you expect me to believe all this, son? Do you think I know so little what blacks are?"

"Neither you nor I, father, can learn, in this place, what Africans are in a better place. I believe, and I certainly expect others to believe, what I have told you, on the strength of sound testimony. I wish you could once witness a shipment for Liberia. It would confirm the testimony wonderfully."

"I am aware, son, that there are powerful emotions in the mind of a negro at the very mention of Africa, or of the sea, or even of a ship. When the importation of slaves was more practised than it is now, the most endearing name by which negroes called each other was 'shipmate.' If it was so endearing on their being brought to a foreign country, I can fancy that it must be yet more so, when they return to their own. The little feeling that blacks have is all spent upon their country."

Alfred shook his head, observing that he believed nobody in Demerara was qualified to pronounce on that point.

"What! not I, that have had to do with negroes all my life?"

"Do you remember the Canary bird that Mary showed you when you were in England?" was Alfred's reply.

"What the little pining thing that was kept in the housekeeper's room at the Grosvenor Square house? O yes! Mary was very fond of it, I remember."

"Mary gave that Canary its seed and water for years, and she would have laughed if any one had told her that she knew nothing about Canary birds; but it would have been very true; for that tame little creature, drawing up its tiny bucket of water when it was bid, seeing the sunbeams shut out as soon as ever it hailed them with a burst of song, was not like one of the same species with the wild, winged creatures that flit about its native islands, and warble unchecked till twilight settles down upon the woods. And we, father, can never guess from looking at a negro sulking in the stocks, or tilling lands which yield him no harvest, what he may be where there is no white man to fear and hate, and where he may reap whatever he has sown. Happily there are some who have been to Liberia, and can tell us what a negro may become."

SUMMARY.

THIS volume, like the last, enlarges on principles already laid down. It treats of the respective values of different kinds of labour, and of a particular mode of investing capital. The truths illustrated may be arranged as follows.

PROPERTY is held by conventional, not natural right.

As the agreement to hold man in property never took place between the parties concerned, *i. e.*, is not conventional, Man has no right to hold Man in property.

Law, *i. e.*, the sanctioned agreement of the parties concerned, secures property.

Where the parties are not agreed, therefore, law does not secure property.

Where one of the parties under the law is held as property by another party, the law injures the one or the other as often as they are opposed. Moreover, its very protection injures the protected party,—as when a rebellious slave is hanged.

Human labour is more valuable than brute labour, only because actuated by reason; for human strength is inferior to brute strength.

The origin of labour, human and brute, is the Will.

The Reason of slaves is not subjected to exercise, nor their will to more than a few weak motives.

The labour of slaves is therefore less valuable than that of brutes, inasmuch as their strength is inferior; and less valuable than that of free labourers, inasmuch as their Reason and Will are feeble and alienated.

Free and slave labour are equally owned by the capitalist.

Where the labourer is not held as capital, the capitalist pays for labour only.

Where the labourer is held as capital, the capitalist not only pays a much higher price for an equal quantity of labour, but also for waste, negligence, and theft, on the part of the labourer.

Capital is thus sunk, which ought to be reproduced.

As the supply of slave-labour does not rise and fall with the wants of the capitalist, like that of free labour, he employs his occasional surplus on works which could be better done by brute labour or machinery.

By rejecting brute labour, he refuses facilities for convertible husbandry. and for improving the labour of his slaves by giving them animal food.

By rejecting machinery, he declines the most direct and complete method of saving labour.

Thus, again, capital is sunk which ought to be reproduced.

In order to make up for this loss of capital to slave owners, bounties and prohibitions are granted in their behalf by government; the waste committed by certain capitalists abroad, being thus paid for out of the earnings of those at home.

Sugar being the production especially protected, everything is sacrificed by planters to the growth of sugar. The land is exhausted by perpetual cropping, the least possible portion of it is tilled for food, the slaves are worn out by overwork, and their numbers decrease in proportion to the scantiness of their food, and the oppressiveness of their toil.

When the soil is so far exhausted as to place its owner out of reach of the sugar-bounties, more food is raised, less toil is inflicted, and the slave population increases.

Legislative protection, therefore, not only taxes the people at home, but promotes ruin, misery, and death, in the protected colonies

A free trade in sugar would banish slavery altogether, since competition must induce an economy of labour and capital; *i. e.*, a substitution of free for slave labour.

Let us see, then, what is the responsibility of the legislature in this matter.

The slave system inflicts an incalculable amount of human suffering, for the sake of making a wholesale waste of labour and capital.

Since the slave system is only supported by legislative protection, the legislature is responsible for the misery caused by direct infliction, and for the injury indirectly occasioned by the waste of labour and capital.

By the same Author,

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